DEVELOPMENT FORUM

Published by the United Nations Department of Public Information for the Joint U.N. Information Committee

volume xviii no. 6
nov. — dec. 1990

Food aid as a development tool

An interview with James Ingram, World Food Programme

When hundreds of thousands of displaced persons from the Persian Gulf poured into Jordan last August, it was only a matter of days before food supplies arrived at the makeshift desert camps. As in so many emergencies, the World Food Programme (WFP) provided the logistical framework for the relief operation. Set up in 1963 to distribute food aid, WFP now handles one quarter of global food aid, some 3 million tonnes this year. With programmes in over 100 countries, it has also become a major funder of agricultural and rural development projects. At his headquarters in Rome, James Ingram, WFP executive director since 1982, talked with DF *Deputy Editor-in-Chief Paul Heath Hoeffel about the difficult, often controversial, task of using food aid as a development tool.*

DF *At least from a logistical point of view, the Jordanian operation was a remarkable success. Has this sort of food emergency become routine for WFP?*

James Ingram: The Jordan operation was indeed almost routine for us. About half of the $1 billion we spend each year goes to emergency operations. They are increasing at a frightening, distressing rate. In Jordan, we were able to respond instantaneously because we had a large stock of food in place to pay Jordanian workers in our existing food for work programmes there. When people began to pour in from Kuwait and Iraq, we were able to switch these prepositioned food stocks to the camps.

DF *What sort of logistical problems did you have?*

Ingram: One of the problems was that the Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis involved did not eat wheat like the Jordanians. Therefore, we arranged for the Soviet aircraft that were used to ferry people back to Bangladesh to bring in rice from Bangladesh on their return flights, so they didn't come back empty. It was the first time we were able to do something like that. Our expertise and operational infrastructure all over the world enables us to approach these emergencies creatively.

DF *There are chronic refugee situations that are neither emergency nor development situations. Do you have a special policy for dealing with these populations, such as the Afghans in Pakistan, the Cambodians on the Thai border or the Salvadorans in Honduras?*

Ingram: Common to all of those is their dependence on food over a period of years and it is important that their diet be varied. They also need to have some money and if possible work so as to bring some variety

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WFP/Sayegh

Displaced Bangladeshis in Jordan get ready for the flight home. WFP arranged for the Soviet aircraft to bring in rice on their return flights.

Indian prostitutes highlight AIDS dilemmas

Bombay—The alarming spread of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) has prompted the police to crack down on prostitutes, who are seen as the single largest source of HIV infection in the country. The recent arrests and detention of hundreds of prostitutes working in brothels here highlights several legal, medical and ethical dilemmas that Indians must come to terms with if they are to confront the disease successfully. The problems are similar to those faced by countries around the world.

In Bombay, where there are an estimated 100,000 prostitutes, more women are being arrested than ever before under the Prevention of Immoral Traffic Act (PITA), hitherto a piece of legislation used largely by the police to extort money from the women. Involuntary HIV testing is being increasingly conducted in red-light areas, and in some cases infected women are confined to remand or rehabilitation homes around the country.

by Shyamala Nataraj

Human rights activists, calling for an end to involuntary testing and detentions, cite the focus on prostitutes as a clear reinforcement of traditional gender discrimination. In this case, women are seen as the cause rather than the main victims of the AIDS epidemic, while other serious causes are

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African privatization: How's it going?

Over the last decade, many African countries have awakened to the fact that governments are not very good at running businesses. Together with scores of nations in both developing and industrialized regions, African governments have undertaken difficult and often painful steps towards the privatization of state-owned enterprises. Correspondent Colleen Lowe Morna has visited several African countries in recent months to find out how the complex but often rewarding reforms are going.

"Today", comments an African business journal, "privatization has joined devaluation and trade liberalization as symbols of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank-backed economic adjustment programmes" in the majority of African countries. The World Bank is presently supporting privatization in 21 sub-Saharan African countries and is involved in studies and audits that will pave the way for privatization in almost all of its operations on the continent.

Yet, in almost all cases, "privatization is behind schedule", according to *From Crisis to Sustainable Growth*, the widely-publicized World Bank report on Africa's long-term economic prospects. Thus, for example, although Ghana has one of the most highly-praised structural adjustment programmes on the continent, government delays in implementing the country's privatization programme have led to fears in Fund and Bank circles that investors will reject Ghana as an investment site.

On the other hand, in the few countries—the West African state of Togo and the southern African state of Malawi, for example—that have bitten the bullet and pushed ahead with sometimes unpopular decisions, the reformed parastatal sector is finally starting to put money back into the treasury, instead of the other way around.

by Colleen Lowe Morna

"It has not been an easy task", confesses Togolese planning minister Barry Mousa Barque. "We have had to make a great effort to be very patient and specific for each enterprise we were to privatize. But we think those efforts have paid off, and that privatization has a positive role to play."

In Africa, privatization is a necessity that cuts across ideological lines. When African

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letters

Sustainable tourism

Dear Editor—While agreeing with the sentiments expressed in "A Search for Sustainable Tourism" (Mar-Apr 1990), may I draw to your attention a small inaccuracy? The photo purporting to show Chiang Mai being protected from exploitative tourism in fact shows the delightful Phi Phi Island, situated over 1,000 km to the south of Chiang Mai in south-east Thailand. Sadly, both Phi Phi and Chiang Mai are suffering from many of the worst excesses of national and international tourism, not least of which in Chiang Mai is the rapidly growing number of village girls now with AIDS or who are HIV positive, a major life-threatening problem not mentioned in the article. However, thank you for pointing out that alternative patterns of tourism are possible. I wish them every success.

Dr. Philip Brookes, Coordinator, Community Health Programme, P.O. Box 5, Pokhara, Nepal 33701.

(Although we're off by 1,000 km, Phi Phi Island is equally endangered. Ed.)

The poverty trap

Dear Editor—I am always interested in your articles concerning population questions. After reading "250,000 a day and counting" in the July/August issue, I would like to offer the following commentary.

One idea circulating in some circles is that poverty, in itself, is the central cause of environmental degradation, and that the simple act of combating poverty would almost automatically resolve all environmental problems including pollution and the depletion of non-renewable resources.

I think this kind of slogan is a trap. The planet is already overpopulated, the consequences of which can be seen everywhere, but in different forms. The "development" that industrialized countries export to the "poor" regions is based on growth and the overexploitation of natural resources. It is inevitable that the overload caused by this kind of human development, and borne by the biosphere, is most noticeable in the weakest links of the immense human chain, with an acuteness that sometimes offends human dignity.

Consequently, it is an illusion to believe that by modifying the poverty level of a given category of the population, the global environmental quality will improve. If we raise the standard of living by intensifying the exploitation and consumption of our global environment's natural resources, the resources provided to protect the environment can only be hopelessly insufficient.

Edith Piret, *Head of Public Relations, Mouvement Démographie-Ecologie, 5 rue Frères Collin, 6941 Bomal S/O, Belgium.*

Unique role

Dear Editor—Greetings to your entire staff. Permit me to speak for many rural development workers and various intellectuals in conveying to you our sincere thanks for the relevance, seriousness and freedom of the press which your articles display. The articles in the March/April issue ("Third World debt: It should not be repaid", "New strategies for the Sahel", and "The least developed countries: Plan for the 1990s," etc.) were exemplary. Moreover, all my colleagues borrow my issues of *Development Forum.*

Recently, the subject of one of the articles in the Sept/Oct 1988 issue was used in a professional exam of rural development technicians.

Long live *Development Forum!*

El Hadji Khaly Dieye, *A.T.E. Secteur Elevage de Matam, BP 7 Senegal.*

Dear Editor—I'd like to pay tribute to the unique role which *Development Forum* my favourite periodical, so ably plays in expanding knowledge and in encouraging awareness of the major questions which influence the future of the global community. No other publication does this so well.

Being a professor of political science and economics, I find your newspaper of great help in preparing my courses and in enriching my knowledge. I wish it lots of success.

***Chelbi Allaoua,** Professor of political science and economics, BP 60 C, Sidi Aïch, Bejaïa 06700, Algeria*

QUOTE FOR THOUGHT...

Progress

"Like winds and sunsets, wild things were taken for granted until progress began to do away with them. Now we face the question of whether a still higher 'standard of living' is worth its cost in things natural, wild, and free."

—Aldo Leopold, US conservationist and environmentalist and author of *Sand County Almanac,* 1949.

Selling smoke

Dear Editor—We want to express thanks to your magazine for including the article entitled "Selling Smoke in Latin America", written by Laura Acosta, former Tobacco Programme Coordinator in this office.

Ms. Acosta is a Chilean sociologist who has contributed much to the start of this programme at the IOCU regional office for Latin America and the Caribbean. She faced various obstacles while trying to achieve her objectives but even so, she managed to set up a sound, solid basis for our work on this issue.

Cartoonists and Writers Syndicate

We have recently started a bimonthly Circular Letter in Spanish and English versions. We hope that this publication will be a link to create a network among Latin American and Caribbean activists. We aim at raising awareness in terms of tobacco-associated diseases, legislation, economy and advertising—issues which are seriously damaging an already impoverished Latin American society.

We believe it is of great importance to have a fluent communication with your readers in the region and are willing to provide our newsletter to them.

***Alicia Tomalino,** Tobacco Program Coordinator, International Organization of Consumers Unions, Oficina Regional para América Latina y el Caribe, Casilla de Correo 10993, Sucursal 2, C.P. 11100, Montevideo, Uruguay*

DEVELOPMENT FORUM

***"Development Forum** has a key role to play in the creation of such an informed public opinion, which sees the future in terms of humankind as a whole. It offers to its readers varied and stimulating opinions on matters of vital concern. As its name implies, its columns are open to all those who have a creative contribution to make towards greater understanding, be they from governments, the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, the media, the academic community, or private individuals."*

Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, UN Secretary-General

Development Forum is the single regular publication of the United Nations system in the field of economic and social development. It is published by the UN/DPI for the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) and is supported by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), International Bank for Reconstruction and Development-World Bank (IBRD), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Maritime Organization (IMO), International Trade Centre UNCTAD/GATT (ITC), United Nations (UN), United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Fund for Population (UNFPA), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), United Nations University (UNU), Universal Postal Union (UPU), World Food Programme (WFP) and World Health Organization (WHO).

Editor-in-Chief: Hisashi Uno; *Deputy Editor-in-Chief:* Paul Heath Hoeffel; *French Editor:* Sylvie Périn; *Editorial assistants/Typesetters:* Lina Kawaja, Esperanza Velez; *Graphic artist:* Teresita Galimany; *Development Business Editor:* Evelyn Samore; *Editorial assistants:* Lileith Baker, Lolita Sia; *Sales, marketing and circulation:* McDonald Murray; *Production:* Gina Bocaya, Dinah del Rosario, Carmen Lagdameo, Jane McDonald, Nena P. Villena; *Treasury:* Armie Decepida; *Liaison unit, Washington, D.C.:* Randa Mughir, Brent D. Anderson. The Spanish edition of DF is produced under the supervision of Mario Zamorano, Director of the UN Information Centre in Mexico City, who is aided by Cristina Gómez-Llata de Prieto and Itxaro Goikoetxea.

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Development Forum, P.O. Box 5850, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10163-5850, USA. Telephone: (212) 963-1516. Telex: 422311 UN UI, Fax: (212) 963-1381.

Printed in the USA-ISSN 0251-6632

Europe 1992

Impact of single market unclear

by Ross Hammond

As Europe moves towards a common market in 1992, Third World countries are expressing fears that they may be shut out of what some refer to as "Fortress Europe". Despite repeated assurances from European Community (EC) representatives, they worry that their exports may be blocked and that aid and investment will be diverted to Eastern Europe.

The 12 nations of the EC, which began the process of integration in 1958, have been steadily moving towards a common market through integrating their trade, investment and environmental regulations. The Single European Act of 1986 defines the internal market as "an area without internal frontiers in which the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital is assured". The EC market is currently worth $2.3 trillion a year.

Concerns over declining aid, increased protectionism and the dumping of hazardous industries and products on their already fragile economies have led many to question whether the much-heralded single market of the EC will be a blessing or a curse for the Third World.

As Ann Clywd, Britain's shadow minister for overseas development and cooperation, said to reporters in London recently, "While 1992 creates opportunities, it also poses new risks, particularly to the poorest countries. While their traditional preferences with individual EC countries are eroded, they will face the greatest difficulties because they lack the marketing and advertising skills or the funds for direct investment that other countries have".

Trade

Many developing countries rely heavily on trade with Europe to sustain their struggling economies. In fact by 1989, the EC accounted for nearly one fourth of exports from developing countries and almost 60 per cent from sub-Saharan Africa.

On the whole, EC officials have gone out of their way to present an optimistic front regarding the impact of a common market on the South. The EC estimates that after integration, imports will increase by 7 per cent and the lowering of trade barriers in member states will boost export opportunities for other countries.

Christine Shaw, an economic affairs officer with the UN Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (DIESA), says that the emergence of the common market in 1992 may in fact be a good thing for Third World countries because it will cause a growth in the European economy as a whole and thus its appetite for imports. She adds that it will not make sense for a booming European economy to raise protectionist barriers. Furthermore, the specific characteristics of the EC's trade policy have yet to be hammered out.

On the other hand, the South Commission, an independent group of Third World leaders led by former Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere, admits that while there is the possibility that such a "trickle down" will occur, a more likely scenario is that as internal barriers are removed, less efficient producers within the Community will receive preferential treatment for their goods at the expense of Third World exporters.

Whatever the outcome, most agree that benefits from 1992 will not accrue to all countries equally. According to Ann Clywd, the EC has done "nothing to ensure that the single market benefits, rather than harms, Europe's poorer partners".

Those "poorer partners" are mostly the 68 members of the African, Carribean and Pacific (ACP) states that have enjoyed preferential access to European markets for manufactured goods and commodities. The Lomé IV Convention, a 10-year compact between the ACP countries and the EC signed last December, links these two unequal partners in a series of trade, aid and cultural relationships.

Many ACP members were unhappy with the unwillingness of their European partners to assure them of continued preferential market access after 1992. And, the rules on manufactured goods that were included in the final convention document were seen by many as unfair. As Ghebray Berhane, secretary general of the ACP, puts it, "The EC has always seen us as a supplier of commodities. The moment a country tries to move into manufacturing, very effective safeguards are put up to try to stop us."

The EC's "local content" regulations, for example, bar the import of manufactured goods that have less than 60 per cent of their parts made in the country of origin, a difficult task for poorer countries. And agricultural goods are permitted, provided they do not compete with European products.

"While 1992 creates opportunities, it also poses new risks."

ACP countries may find the preferences they previously enjoyed under the Lomé conventions eliminated under the new trading regime. While this fear may be misplaced, nevertheless "1992 or not, the ACP share of the market is diminishing anyhow", says Berhane, pointing to the growing trade between Latin America and Asia with the EC.

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World Bank turns attention to Eastern Europe

by Judith Evans

The World Bank came out of its annual meetings in Washington in September ready to move into Eastern Europe in force. Its plans to assist the transformation of the beleaguered economies of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria have bumped the problem of Third World debt relief from the top of the Bank's agenda, leaving only the economic repercussions of the Persian Gulf crisis sharing the spotlight with Eastern Europe.

Many analysts agree with John Gutfreund, chairman of Salomon Inc. and founding member of the Bretton Woods Committee, who recently wrote that "The Bretton Woods organizations can give invaluable help in navigating these [East European] uncharted waters". The Bank has earmarked $7 billion for loans to Eastern Europe over the next three years.

The multilaterals are already scrambling to get expertise and money flowing into Eastern Europe. The World Bank plans to double the number of professionals dedicated to the region by the end of the year. Currently 60 staff members are involved in technical assistance projects.

Four East European countries have already joined the IMF-World Bank roster—Hungary, Romania, Poland and Czechoslovakia—and Bulgaria is set to sign up next year. The first time ever arrival of an official Soviet delegation to the IMF/World Bank meeting indicated Soviet intentions of becoming a member as well.

The International Finance Corporation (IFC), the World Bank's private investment arm, according to its executive vice president Sir William Ryrie, "really got going in Eastern Europe last year" and is advising the Polish government, is active in Yugoslavia, has seven joint ventures in Hungary and is forming a banking joint venture in Poland.

Despite internal limitations in the organizations themselves and the difficulties that Eastern European economies have in absorbing funds, money is being appropriated. In 1989 World Bank loans totalled $560 million, all of which went to Hungary and Yugoslavia. Both countries are slated for significant increases during 1990. This year Poland will also receive its first World Bank loan. In fact overall lending to the region was $2 billion by this year's midpoint, more than triple what it was last year.

A large proportion of these funds are fast-disbursing policy adjustment loans. Hungary, for example, has received $200 million to support its privatization efforts, to relax price controls, for financial sector reforms and for private sector development. The bulk of the remaining funds will go to designated project financing such as transport, communications, energy, environmental damage control and management training.

The IFC is concentrating on supplying technical consulting for forming capital markets, privatizing state-controlled industries and promoting foreign investment in joint ventures. So far, its major activities have been concentrated in Yugoslavia although it is also undertaking a number of projects in Poland where, for example, it is seeking foreign investors to participate in the privatization of the Gdynia shipyard and is working on a joint venture in the auto industry.

"What these countries are looking for", says Douglas Gustafson, the IFC director for European investment, "is what we're good at."

In fact, crews of IMF and World Bank staff members are already on the ground organizing technical assistance in the region. World Bank loans for longer-term structural improvements are already under study or even at work while the IMF has $1 billion in outstanding loans in Eastern Europe for balance-of-payments assistance.

The birth of a new Bretton Woods-type entity, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), is perhaps the most important development in the rush to transformation in the East.

Headed by Frenchman Jacques Attali, former adviser to French president François Mitterrand, the EBRD has already raised over $13 billion to lend and is targeting 40 per cent of this to the public sector and the remaining 60 per cent to private ventures. The Soviet Union is already a member. Based in London, the EBRD has joined with the IMF, World Bank and OECD to produce the first survey of the

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Europe's single market

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Berhane sees 1992's single market as part of a growing trend towards protectionism among the developed countries, evidenced by the lack of progress in the GATT talks currently underway in Brussels. "The ACP countries don't have a structured enough economy to react to 1992. They are so lop-sided", he explained. "With some countries in Africa relying for 97 per cent of their foreign exchange earnings on single crops, the moment the prices fall even a fraction the whole economy is threatened. Some countries like Nicaragua and Zimbabwe will be able to resist for a while, but the question is for how long."

Strict standards

Another concern of developing countries is that a single trading regime will bring with it strict environmental and health standards for all goods traded within the EC. Mozambique, for example, could lose up to 40 per cent of its export income if its prawn exports fail to meet the new EC health standards.

Explains Ann Clywd, "If Mozambique cannot meet the new standards on shellfish set by the EC, its export industry will go down the tubes. This means there will be no foreign currency for food, medicine and tools. In a country where one in three children dies before its fifth birthday, such a loss of export earnings would be, literally, fatal." While Shaw has no doubt that standards will go up, she believes that "the clever ones will find a way around it".

Many countries of the South now find themselves caught in a vise between the prospects of an integrated Europe and the rapprochement between East and West. This is most apparent in the battle for foreign aid. Despite repeated assurances by officials of the EC, World Bank, International Monetary Fund and bilateral aid agencies that assistance to Eastern Europe will not affect the levels of aid to the South, many in the Third World are not convinced. As an example, they note that Italy had recently expanded its list of eligible states to include the countries of Eastern Europe without increasing its overall aid budget.

Cartoonists and Writers Syndicate

Italy has also made proposals to boost EC aid to those countries bordering the EC, namely the countries of the Mediterranean (Tunisia, Algeria, etc). This trend may reflect not so much a reduction as a redirection of aid towards those countries closer to Europe.

The South Commission warned of a situation where the North will divert both money and technology from development in the South to Eastern Europe. "In the first, wholly appropriate, flush of enthusiasm over political and economic reform in that part of the North, the South might be further forgotten and marginalized. That would be a blow struck against the interests of three quarters of the world's people and ultimately against the interests of the world community as a whole."

Whatever the final outcome of the aid battle, many argue that what is important for the countries of the South is increased market access to the EC. In 1988, for example, developing countries as a whole received $188 billion in export earnings from the EC compared to the $24 billion they received in aid from EC countries.

If Third World countries are to find any solace in recent events, it is in the fact that member states of the EC may be unwilling to cede their bilateral aid programmes to the authority of the EC. And those countries of the South with long-standing political, commercial and military ties to individual EC states may see their economies prosper as their "parent" countries' economy improves with the emergence of the common market.

It is still too early to tell what the precise advantages and disadvantages of a common market will be for developing countries. Many no doubt will become apparent following the conclusion of the GATT talks this December, and most of the rest after the EC has formalized its trade and tariff policies, sometime before formal economic integration.

As the South Commission emphasized so heavily in its report, the only sure way to boost developing country economies is to increase South-South trade. Given the growth of regional trade blocs, not only the EC but the US-Canada free trade agreement as well, increased intra-South trade seems inevitable. Concludes Berhane, "We are condemned to cooperate." □

Ross Hammond is a freelance editor and writer on temporary assignment with Development Forum.

East bloc aid cuts: The case of Mozambique

Maputo—For Third World countries with close ties to the Eastern bloc, the concern is not simply one of less aid from the West. As illustrated in the case of Mozambique, these countries are also experiencing cuts in aid from the very same countries now emerging as competitors.

"We appreciate that, with all the changes taking place among our friends in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the level of aid from them cannot remain the same", says Mozambican Central Bank governor Eneias Comiche. "At the same time, this is a blow for us, and we are trying to see if we can develop new forms of cooperation."

Mozambique's biggest East bloc donors were the former GDR and the Soviet Union. With the unification of the two Germanys, the East German embassy in Maputo has now been closed. The expanded Ministry for Economic Cooperation in Bonn says it hopes to maintain projects initiated by the former GDR in Mozambique. But the largest of these—the recruitment of Mozambican labourers who repatriated $16 million in foreign exchange each year—has ceased as German enterprises retool to deal with greater competition.

Meanwhile, according to the Soviet Union's first secretary in Maputo, Serguei Andreev, Soviet assistance to Mozambique, which used to amount to about $200 million annually (at the official exchange rate) is down to $90 million this year, and is likely to drop again next year.

"We have realized ourselves, and our Mozambican friends see, that our resources are not so unlimited as we used to think", noted the Soviet official in a rare and frank interview. In light of the chronic problems that the Soviet Union is facing as it restructures politically, "we have to try and match our obligations with our possibilities", Andreev said.

Much of the Soviet Union's assistance to Mozambique has been in the form of military advisors, hardware and technical experts. These have all been cut back drastically in the last few months: for example, the UNDP is presently frantically trying to replace upward of 60 Soviet doctors due to leave the country before the end of the year.

Remaining Soviet aid has mostly been in the form of credits for vital imports like oil. Under a new cooperation agreement, soon to come into effect, Mozambique will have to obtain most of its imports from the Soviet Union on market terms. But, according to Andreev, the Soviet Union, which exports 10 times more to Mozambique than it imports from the country, will try to reduce the trade gap between them. "We hope in the end", he says, "to have a more mutually beneficial relationship with Mozambique."

C.L.M.

World Bank goes East

From page 3

Soviet economy, due by the end of the year.

Iconoclastic in several ways, the EBRD, whose membership includes Western as well as Central and East European nations and the US, has, as Attali put it, "a highly political" mission. Its charter limits financing to countries that are "committed to and applying principles of multiparty democracy, pluralism and market economics".

Debt reduction, the issue that obsessed last year's World Bank/IMF conclave, which came only six months after the Brady Plan for debt reduction was unveiled, was relegated to those sessions specifically dealing with heavily indebted countries in Latin America, Africa and Eastern Europe. This reflected a growing confidence among Bank officials that the longer-term solutions to the debt problems are in place.

In spite of the accomplishments in crisis management and merited claims to have put themselves out in front of East European reform, the IMF and the World Bank left some questioning their role in the Third World. In fact, however inadvertently, the two multilaterals often appeared to share Argentine President Carlos Menem's press conference remark in September: "The Third World? I don't know where the Third World is." He is not the only leader whose geographical vision is changing.

Although Third World leaders have questioned whether the multilaterals can take on the financing burden in Eastern Europe without reducing their support for the developing world, that position was not strongly heard at this year's annual meeting.

The forward march of the Brady/Baker schemes is contributing to the sensation that "there is life after debt". For one thing, Bank and IMF officials insist that they will be able to fund East European programmes adequately without reducing debt relief elsewhere, thus increasing confidence that debt reduction will speed up in future. France has taken the lead with its bilateral cancellation of debts among LDCs in Africa and, although the US effort to forgive Egypt's bilateral military debts has not been approved, this too is being read as one more step toward accepting debt reduction.

The multilaterals, while strained by the $4 billion in arrears accumulated by nine countries—Peru, Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Zambia, Viet Nam, Kampuchea, Somalia and Panama—have also moved to provide relief.

Though the suffering imposed by carrying debt burdens continues to be an open wound in many Third World nations, the focus of concern for the future has turned to trade.

As tariff barriers are dissolving in many countries—Mexico and Argentina are clear cases—and as the GATT's Uruguay Round stumbles to its conclusion, Eastern Europe's main threat to the Third World is becoming one of markets more than money.

While the world awaits the GATT's final decisions on trade liberalization in early December, the nations of the Third World, like their more industrialized counterparts, are positioning themselves in the event of its failure to ensure more and freer trade. To some degree, that may mean greater competition and less solidarity among developing countries.

And in spite of the triumphs of the multilaterals at this year's conclave—rapid, agile response to the Persian Gulf crisis and the assumption of important leadership roles in reforming East Europe's economies—it is less clear how they respond to the era of trade—not aid—that many are forecasting.

It has become commonplace to hear about the collapse of East/West barriers. Now developing countries must confront the tendencies of a North/South polarization that threatens to replace the Cold War axis of tension. Despite assurances from the multilaterals, many developing countries continue to view the arrival of Eastern Europe in their ranks with reserve if not alarm. □

Judith Evans, a journalist who specializes in international finance, is based in Washington, D.C.

international development news

Organic farming in Israel expands to meet European demands

Organic farming is expanding everywhere as more and more people demand food that is free of chemicals and other additives. In Europe, for instance, demand for organic produce is exceeding production, a fact that has not gone unnoticed by organic farmers and growers outside Europe. Growers in Israel have seen the potential for this market and productic of organically grown fruit and vegetables is the only sector expanding in an otherwise depressed agricultural sector. Most of the Israeli organic produce goes to Western Europe, though tomatoes and a few other crops are exported to the United States.

The Israeli organic movement began in the 1970s, when some farmers became alarmed at the increasing amount of chemicals used in growing food crops. Some kibbutzes successfully grew crops without them, and other growers soon followed suit.

Once growers decide to convert they must conform to the regulations of the Bio-Dynamic Agricultural Association. The Association checks a farmer's fields and then sends him on a short course to learn the basic methods of bio-organic agriculture. Next is the conversion process, during which time he does not use any more chemicals. Once a farmer has been passed fit for organic growing he or she is paid regular visits.

Pnina Mas, a tomato grower near Mt. Gilboa, explains: "We have someone in charge of all the biological growing in Israel. He tells you what you are allowed to do and he comes every week or more and sees that everything is exactly as it should be."

Israel Ministry of Tourism

Israeli fruit and vegetable farmers find that patience pays off when they convert to organic production.

The basis of any organic system is compost. The basic materials are cow and poultry manure, rock dust and imported guano for nitrogen. The conversion period of two years is probably the most difficult time, especially for tree crops like citrus which require many chemicals in the conventional system.

Grapefruit trees suffered when the chemical tap was suddenly turned off because people did not know how much water the trees would need, or how much organic manure would replace the fertilizer which they had been given. Many impatient growers said that the best thing to do would be to plough the trees under or give them chemicals quickly, but fruit farmers who believed in the system persevered and now the yields are going up every year.

The costs of organic farming are slightly higher, mainly in manpower for weeding and organic manures which cost more than chemical fertilizers. But many farms have reached a level of soil fertility that has allowed them to reduce manure consumption quite considerably.

Most organic growers in Israel are generally not free to grow what they like when they like. The Bio-Dynamic Agricultural Association and the Agricultural Marketing Company—AGREXCO—work closely together. They plan about 10 months in advance and try to match the production potential to the marketing possibilities. This is done with the growers, who know well in advance what to grow and when to grow it so that production will take place at the best time with optimum yield.

AGREXCO maintains strict quality control over produce. Organic produce is usually smaller in volume than the conventional one, and can have blemishes. Unfortunately, standards for organic produce set up by the supermarkets are the same as for conventional products which has caused them to reject a large amount of it.

Citrus has not had quite the same problems, as the demand for organically produced juice has been growing in Europe. This year, in fact, 30 per cent of organic fruit exports will go as whole fruit and 70 per cent for juice. The prices range from 50 to 100 per cent higher than regularly, chemically produced juice.

This premium is encouraging other growers to switch. But organic growers are in many respects feeling their way in the dark because of a lack of research. That may change soon as Israel moves to set up an agricultural research station devoted solely to organic farming.

One of its first projects will be to look at the interaction between soil fertility and disease and pest incidence. Organic growers contend that soil treated correctly will have fewer problems with disease and pests and therefore will not need the chemicals so widely used in conventional agriculture. None of the scientists involved in this research are committed organic people, but they have been impressed by the success of the organic growers and are conscious of the demand in Europe for chemical-free produce. BBC □

David Dixon

Non-traditional exports up too

When it comes to agricultural exports, "non-traditional" is the buzz-word on African lips these days. All over the continent, production of non-traditional commodities is growing by leaps and bounds. These new products include everything from fruits, vegetables and flowers to Kenyan silk, Zimbabwean ostriches and Madagascan lychees.

The reason for the diversification is simple. Africa's traditional export commodities, such as coffee, cocoa and sugar, face declining prices and global oversupplies. Cut flowers and seasonal fruits and vegetables on the other hand can find ready markets abroad.

Kenya pioneered the production of horticultural exports in the late 1960s with the creation of the Horticultural Crops Development Authority (HCDA). Since then its production has jumped from 1,476 tons in 1968 to more than 59,000 tons today. The list of exported produce includes French beans, avocados, egg-plants, peppers, squash, melons, mangoes and strawberries. Kenya has also become the world's fourth-largest exporter of flowers, particularly carnations, roses and orchids.

Between them, these commodities earn more than $90 million a year, still just a drop in the bucket when compared with traditional commodities. Horticultural products account for less than 5 per cent of Kenya's export earnings, compared with 26 per cent for coffee and 19 per cent for tea.

Nevertheless, other countries have jumped on the non-traditional commodities bandwagon. Côte d'Ivoire has become a major producer of pineapples and flowers, while in Zimbabwe, the Hortico company produces 40 tons of "exotic" vegetables a week for export, including English runner beans, cherry tomatoes and asparagus.

The past few years have been a boom period for African horticulture. In 1988 alone, the value of Ghana's non-traditional agricultural exports rose by 44 per cent to $27 million. At the same time, green beans, fruits and flowers increased from 5 per cent of Tanzania's total exports to 40 per cent.

In many cases the impetus for this growth has been new regulations allowing producers to market their crops independently of government marketing boards and to keep a higher percentage of foreign exchange earnings—in Uganda, 100 per cent.

For Uganda, export diversification has been a matter of life and death. The country traditionally depended on coffee for more than 90 per cent of its export revenues, but in the past four years coffee prices have dropped by almost two-thirds. In a bid to make up for lost revenues, the government is vigorously pushing non-traditional agricultural exports, including fruit, vegetables, ginger and sesame. These commodities earned Uganda a total of $70.8 million during 1988 and 1989. By comparison, coffee exports earned $264 million in 1988.

But experts say African nations will be unable to continue their horticultural export boom unless they solve several major problems. Number one is the shortage of air cargo space to take highly perishable fruits, vegetables and flowers to markets abroad. A former assistant agriculture minister said that at least 4,000 tons of horticultural produce rot each week at Jomo Kenyatta Airport for lack of cargo space on flights or cold storage facilities at the airport.

Dependence on national airlines, with their limited capacities, is a problem for all African horticultural producers. Moreover, charter operators between southern Africa and Europe have been reluctant to provide cargo space because there is not enough trade to fill their southbound flights. Rising costs of aviation fuel have also led many airlines to raise rates.

To get around these problems, Kenya has begun transporting some of its less perishable produce, such as pineapples and avocados, by sea in refrigerated container ships. In addition, a number of countries, including Uganda, Côte d'Ivoire and Swaziland, have developed canning and processing industries for fruit. Canned fruit and juices not only fetch higher prices, but are easier to transport than raw produce. African Farmer □

Christian Howlett Spoor and George Kawule

Solar power links West Africa

The ability to make use of faxes, telexes, electronic mail, bulletin boards and other new information technologies depends first and foremost on a reliable telecommunications infrastructure. However, many of the least developed countries lack the most basic elements: a broad, interlacing network of all-weather roads, rural telephone networks and postal facilities. It is said that the city of Tokyo has more telephones than the entire continent of Africa.

Even if low-income countries manage to build roads, telephone lines and post offices, they may lack the financial and technical capacity to operate and maintain

by Mike Laflin

them. But West African countries may now have found a low-cost, energy-efficient solution to this problem.

Before the Pan African Telecommunications Network (PANAFTEL) was founded in 1974, most rural areas in West Africa did not enjoy telephone services, and long-distance calls between neighbouring countries had to be routed through London or Paris. In 1982, PANAFTEL put into operation a microwave communication system directly linking Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Benin. When it was designed in the late 1970s, the natural choice to power the isolated stations was turbo-electric generators.

UN/Sean Sprague

Panels of solar voltaic cells in Thies, Senegal, are more reliable than distant generators.

But, because of frequent power cuts, the system operated over the full 3,000-km diameter only 60 or 70 per cent of the time. The root of the problem lay in the generators: they were not always able to handle the high power requirements; they required frequent and relatively sophisticated maintenance; the supply of fuel was problematic; and fuel prices were higher than had been estimated.

In late 1985, photovoltaic panels were installed at several dozen stations at a cost of approximately $120,000 per site, making this one of the first cases where an existing microwave system has been converted to solar power. By 1989, system availability had improved to 96 per cent, due in part to other improvements such as monitoring systems and more effective training programmes. Operating costs have been substantially reduced because there are no fuel charges. Maintenance has largely consisted of routine battery inspections and cleaning the desert dust off the panels.

The capital cost for conversion to solar at each site is about four times the annual cost of fuel. However, since each unit should last for more than 10 years, the savings should be considerable. What is harder to quantify in economic terms is greater confidence in the system that higher efficiency will generate among users, and what new applications they may be encouraged to try. With any luck, electronic mail, faxes and other new information technologies will soon be making a difference in communications in West Africa. □

Mike Laflin is Director of Development Communication Report, *in which this article first appeared, published by the Clearinghouse on Development Communication.*

Fluorescent converts

In the face of power shortages and disruptions, many governments in the developing world build expensive power plants to make up for energy shortfalls. But a cheaper, more efficient option to at least part of this huge, capital-intensive undertaking exists, and it is as simple as changing a light bulb. By replacing conventional incandescent light bulbs with today's advanced fluorescents, developing countries can substantially reduce their power requirements.

by Nicholas Lenssen

Investing in a compact fluorescent light-bulb factory is 320 times cheaper than building the new coal-burning power plants.

Compact fluorescents have all of the virtues of incandescents—they produce the same "warm" light—yet they last 10 times longer and use only one-quarter as much electricity.

An energy-deficient country like India could benefit quickly from conversion to fluorescent lighting. According to Ashok Gadgil of the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory in California and Gilberto De Martino Jannuzzi of the State University of Campinas in Brazil, India's 300 million incandescent light bulbs, for example, account for about 35 per cent of the country's peak electrical demand. Most of these inefficient bulbs are switched on in the early evening, the time of heaviest overall electricity usage.

If India replaced just 20 per cent of its incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent ones over the next decade, the researchers say, the country could avoid building 8,000 megawatts of new generating capacity, or about 8 per cent of the government plan. Savings could amount to more than $430 million a year by 2000.

Another advantage is that it might help India's energy planners reduce subsidies without hurting poor recipients. Subsidized electricity rates for the poor in India and other developing countries contribute to a cycle of persistent power shortages leading to power plant construction, which begets international debt.

As Gadgil and Jannuzzi propose, government-owned utilities could use part of the money that otherwise would be spent on subsidies to buy and distribute compact fluorescent bulbs. The utility company saves by being able to sell less electricity at a loss to subsidized residential users, and more to higher-paying industrial users. Through it all, poor people end up with more affordable lighting.

To implement this alternative lighting scheme, developing countries will have to find ways to make compact fluorescent bulbs affordable. These bulbs now cost more than $15 each at retail outlets in the United States.

Bombay's electricity board has developed a leasing scheme which may solve this problem. Fluorescent bulbs are leased to customers for a monthly fee, which in the long run will save them money on their bills. This $1-million, 40,000-bulb demonstration project is meant to set the stage for more ambitious programmes.

If the Bombay experiment works, then India may be on its way to the second element of the scenario sketched out by Gadgil and Jannuzzi, namely, demand for compact fluorescent bulbs developing to the point at which it makes economic sense to manufacture bulbs domestically.

A single $7-million factory in India could produce enough fluorescent bulbs to save the country 1,587 megawatts of coal-burning electrical capacity. That translates into $2.4 billion (including $950 million in foreign exchange) in savings, mostly from not having to build power plants. As Gadgil points out, investing in a compact fluorescent light-bulb factory is 320 times cheaper than building the new coal-burning power plants needed to power incandescent bulbs.

Given the cost-efficiency of using and making fluorescent bulbs, international and bilateral aid programmes might do well to encourage the domestic manufacture of fluorescent bulbs in the rest of the developing world and in Eastern Europe. But as impressive as the savings from switching light bulbs can be, other steps will have to be taken. By promoting the domestic production of energy-efficient refrigerators, air conditioners, electric motors and other electrical devices, poor countries can reduce their foreign debt and pollution while still meeting development goals. WorldWatch □

Rubber bounces back

With world rubber production projected to reach 7 million tons by the year 2000, Malaysia is looking to its smallholders to increase production to meet global demand. In 1980 world production was 4 million tons; this year it will be 5 million tons.

Although Malaysia is the world's largest producer, it has less land on which to grow

by John Mills

rubber trees than its main competitors, Thailand and Indonesia.

So the smallholders, who currently produce 60 per cent of the rubber on about 70 per cent of the acreage, will be taught improved agronomic practices, such as when to apply fertilizers, better weeding techniques and the best way and times to prune rubber trees.

According to Maurice Cain, of the Malaysian Rubber Producers Association, smallholders will also be selling their products to a central marketing organization that will give them better prices for their products.

The government is encouraging the growers to replant with higher-yielding clones, which mature in four and a half years compared to twice that time with older varieties. Tapping can now start that much earlier after replanting, Cain says.

Average yields from a large estate today are about 1,800 kilograms per hectare, and from smallholder farms about 1,200 kilograms per hectare. Some new trees, still in the experimental stage, are yielding up to 3,000 kilograms per hectare.

Cain says that the geographic range for growing rubber has also been extended. It used to be thought that rubber would only grow within about 10 to 15 degrees from the Equator. But the Chinese, for instance, are growing rubber as far away from the Equator as 22 degrees north and in areas with strong typhoon winds. UNC □

Malaysian "milkmaids" riding home with pails of liquid rubber.

India

Creating water markets: solution or threat for farmers?

One of the fastest growing and least understood phenomena appearing on the Indian irrigation scene is the indigenous development of water markets, where farmers alone or in groups sell groundwater to their neighbours.

Many international observers are deeply suspicious of the role of open markets in development. They assume water markets exploit poor farmers, and names like "water

by John Colmey

barons" appear. Recent studies, however, have produced considerable evidence to the contrary. These have shown that where water markets are competitive, the land value and cropping intensity of non-tubewell owners increases, as do wage rates for farm labourers.

"Water markets", says Tushar Shah, an economist and director of the Institute for Rural Management in Anand, "are extremely economical in getting water out of the ground, especially in states where electricity is charged on a flat rate instead of a pro rata basis."

However, critics say, water markets are not always fair. Where water is scarce, farmers must drill deeper at higher costs. In areas where farmers have very small holdings, as in the Ganges basin, only wealthier farmers can afford to drill wells. In both cases, monopolies can develop, and poor farmers, lacking the necessary access to surface irrigation, pay exorbitant water rates.

The "Catch-22" of water markets is that they can be too efficient. The coastal area of Saurashtra in Gujarat is a case in point. After the government gave liberal loans to farmers to build tubewells in the 1960s, the amount of groundwater withdrawn by wells increased fivefold. Farmers switched from traditional food crops to water-loving cash crops, and the area gained the name of "Lili Nagher", or Green Creeper. Eight years later, the groundwater table fell some 10 meters, and salt water began to seep laterally into the aquifer from the coast.

The faster the salt water creeped in, the faster the owners drew water, until over 12,000 tubewells became saline, rendering the land useless. Mango yields fell from 40 to 2 metric tons, and land values fell from $5,000 to $1,000 per hectare. In several villages, families sold their livestock and migrated in search of work.

"There is the danger of overexploitation, particularly in hardrock areas", Shah admits, "and I don't think anyone understands it."

Presently, there is little control over who drills a tubewell or how much water is being pumped; even the exact number of wells is unknown. The only legislation proposed anywhere in the country has been awaiting passage in Gujarat for several years. Even in areas which are fast nearing overexploitation there is little the government can do to control owners.

There is also the problem of water rights, a complicated issue in even the most developed countries. "Surface water belongs to the government", says Anthony Bottrall, programme officer for the Ford Foundation in New Delhi, "but groundwater belongs to anyone who can afford to put a hole in the ground."

For now, water markets will continue to set the agenda. "The role of public institutions or policy makers is to understand how these markets work and how you can tinker around with them to get the optimum", says Shah. □

John Colmey is editor of IIMI Review, *a publication of the Sri Lanka-based International Irrigation Management Institute.*

World Bank/J. Bretenbach

Private irrigation tubewells such as this one in the village of Suara, India, are increasing agricultural yields—at least for the farmers who can afford to pay.

Great box of fire

REFLECTOR CATCHES EXTRA SUNLIGHT
CLEAR WINDOW LETS IN SUNLIGHT AND HOLDS IN HEAT
INSULATED BOX HOLDS IN HEAT TO COOK FOOD IN POTS
DARK, COVERED POTS AND DARK TRAY TURN SUNLIGHT INTO HEAT

In rural Somalia, it is not uncommon to see women trudging across the sweltering countryside bent beneath heavy loads of firewood. Somalia has no oil, and its fuel resources of wood and charcoal are rapidly running out. At present rates of consumption, there may be no trees left in as little as six years.

For Somalia, hope has come in the shape of a small cardboard box. Solar box cookers, cheaply built from cardboard, tape and window glass, can take Somalia's abundant sunlight and put it to work cooking. On a clear day, a solar box cooker can easily reach 325 degrees F within an hour.

Solar box cookers, now being promoted worldwide by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization, were created in 1976 by Barbara Kerr and Sherry Cole from Arizona, a state in the dry south-west of the United States. The Kerr-Cole "Eco-cooker" was patented to prevent any corporation from trying to control the technology for profit. As a result solar boxes are now being built and sold in Kenya, Haiti, Zimbabwe and Lesotho.

Bob Metcalf, co-founder of Solar Box Cookers International (SBCI), believes solar cooking "has more potential to improve the lives of people in developing countries than most other single technologies". As much as 90 per cent of the fuel consumed in developing countries is used to cook food and to heat water, Metcalf notes. Now, with a set of SBCI instructions, anyone with $15 of supplies, a knife and one day's labour can construct a solar oven capable of cooking 15 pounds of food. Boxes can be made from plywood or recycled cardboard boxes. Insulating material may be provided by goose down, rice hulls, wood, straw, crushed newspapers or broken Styrofoam.

Solar cooking typically takes twice as long as conventional cooking, which means that chopped vegetables are ready in 45 minutes, bread in 90 minutes, chicken in two hours. The advantage is

by Gar Smith

that solar ovens do not require constant vigilance, thus freeing women from their "bondage to the campfire". Solar ovens can be used year-round in the tropics and for eight months out of the year in temperate zones.

Solar box cooking has now been introduced in Somalia, Egypt, Djibouti, Sierra Leone, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Indonesia, Guatemala, Bolivia, Belize, Mexico, Yemen and the Navajo Nation. SBCI's goal for the next decade is to introduce 2.4 billion people to the economics of solar box cooking.

Earth Island Journal

SBCI provides a number of resources, including construction plans ($5), a Solar Box Cooker Handbook ($2) and an 18-minute video, 'Four Square Feet of Sunshine' ($20). Contact SBCI, 1724 Eleventh Street, Sacramento, CA 95814 USA. Tel. (916) 444-6616. To order an Eco-cooker contact Kerr Enterprises, P.O. Box 27417, Tempe, AZ 85285, USA. Tel. (602) 968-3068.

Sweeter bees

Tanzania has recently developed an efficient honey extractor, opening new opportunities for the beekeeping industry. The country, with a potential for producing 138,000 tons of honey and 9,200 tons of beeswax a year, exploits only 3.5 per cent of the resource. Poor harvesting methods are in large part responsible for this shortfall.

The centrifugal honey extractor was designed and produced by a young agricultural engineer, Valery Ng'atigwa, who recently gave a demonstration at the Soloine University of Agriculture in Morogoro.

The honeycomb is placed in a perforated cage enclosed by an outer container before the cage is swirled at 200 revolutions per minute by hand. The honey is thrown out to the sides of the container, collecting at the bottom, from where it is drained.

The combs, which are attached to wooden frames, remain intact after the honey has been extracted so they can later be returned to the beehives for reuse by the bees.

"In this way it is possible to harvest honey every three to four weeks", says Ng'atigwa. He has used locally available materials to make the machine appropriate for rural areas where most beekeepers live and where there is no electricity. □

Chris Mwalubandu / PANOS

the UN system at work worldwide

world review

economic and social information

drugs

Taking money launderers to the cleaners

As the realization grows that the world's $500 billion illegal drug trade is a major obstacle to the development process, developing countries are joining a UN-sanctioned drive to deprive drug traffickers of essential banking services.

Bahrain, for example, recently signed an agreement with Britain to expose money laundering operations of drug traffickers by tracing, freezing and confiscating tainted cash. Other banking centres in developing countries are expected to follow suit.

The illegal drug trade—estimated by the United Nations to be second in turnover only to the world armaments business—deals far more damage to the poor countries, where much of the contraband originates, than to the hard-currency import markets of the rich West. "Drug abuse is now right at the top of priorities requiring urgent attention from the international community", UN secretary-general Javier Pérez de Cuéllar said recently. "By its very nature, it is truly international and it therefore demands coordinated international response."

Countering the negative impact of the drug trade on the development process is central to the UN efforts. The industry generates violence and corruption, diverts vast economic resources, disrupts orderly agricultural development and creates enormous public health problems by spreading addiction.

For this reason, most of the countries ratifying the UN Convention against the Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances so far are in the developing regions.

The convention, adopted in Vienna in 1988, lays a universal legal foundation for a new era in global cooperation especially in the sensitive areas involving banking and corporate transactions. The convention covers a host of essential drug control areas including confiscation of cash and property from drug traffickers, international cooperation in law enforcement and training, monitoring of substances used in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs, extradition, legal assistance and measures to reduce the demand for and eradicate the cultivation of illicit drugs. As a follow-up to the convention, the UN designated the 1990s as the UN Decade against Drug Abuse.

A simple way of laundering drug money is through investment in tax havens that enforce strong bank secrecy laws. Suspected debt-equity swap schemes of some Third World countries provide a more complex alternative for large sums. Drug investigators fear that the inexperienced and capital-starved financial institutions of the developing regions—including the fledgling democracies of Eastern Europe—could become easy victims of the traffickers.

The major police forces on the trail of drug money are especially concerned with Hong Kong, Panama, the Channel Islands, Switzerland and some Caribbean islands. They are also worried about the increasing attractiveness of Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland to traffickers supplying the prosperous black markets of Western Europe from the productive poppy fields of the Golden Crescent of the Middle East which comprises parts of Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Thomas Land

The author is a foreign correspondent who writes on global affairs.

crime

Crime congress looks to 21st century

UN secretary-general Javier Pérez de Cuéllar said it occurred at a time of "vast changes and great promise" —a time when crime had been transformed into a "global menace" by technological advances and the internationalization of many activities. Fidel Castro, president of Cuba, linked crime and development and declared that success in the fight against crime required international cooperation and commitment to the fight against poverty and marginalization.

Meeting under the shadow of expected rapid crime growth during the 1990s and beyond, the Eighth UN Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (Havana, 27 Aug—7 Sept) discussed the growing internationalization of such crimes as degradation of the environment, organized crime, terrorism, drug and arms trafficking, money laundering and theft of cultural property. Debate also touched on the promotion of a more effective administration of justice and the treatment of offenders, including juvenile delinquents. In addition, the Congress addressed new forms of criminality—computer crimes, bank fraud and other economic crimes.

In the five-day general debate, 81 speakers echoed the Congress' theme of "international cooperation in crime prevention and criminal justice" in the context of development. As the Brazilian delegate put it, the international community could not afford to be naive, as the "clever crook had become the international crook", stealing from the environment and plundering cultural heritages.

The representative of Madagascar said that while countries of the North spoke of organized crime, drug crimes, etc., developing countries of the South had to deal with development problems like cattle rustling and bush fires, in addition to crimes of fraud, corruption and tax evasion.

Both India and the Republic of Korea agreed that with economic development and modernization came newly emerging forms of criminality, transcending national boundaries.

With regard to computer-related crimes, the Congress called on states to intensify their efforts to combat abuses through forfeiture or restitution of illegally acquired assets and through improved computer security and prevention measures.

The elimination of corrupt officials was urged, as was the creation of legal provisions for the forfeiture of funds and property acquired through corrupt practices. Stating that forfeiture of the proceeds of crime was one of the most significant recent developments, the Congress called for attention to be focused on new techniques developed in various countries of "following the money trail" and on the use of telecommunications and electronic surveillance methods.

On the subject of prisoners contracting the HIV virus and AIDS, the Congress recommended that states develop a policy on AIDS prevention and control in prisons, based on the WHO global AIDS strategy; assist prison administrators in the development of AIDS-prevention strategies; encourage international cooperation in the exchange of educational materials to halt the spread of the disease in prisons, and elaborate guidelines for the institutional and clinical management of HIV-infected prsioners and those with AIDS.

energy

Alternative fuels

Paris (UNEP)—The use of alternative transportation fuels is not new nor is the automotive technology they require exotic. Some 500,000 natural gas vehicles are in use worldwide, as are about 800 methanol vehicles. While alternative fuel use is not a panacea for the world's air pollution problems nor for the depletion of non-renewable energy sources, these fuels offer the advantage of working well and cleanly in automobiles. Moreover, in many applications they cost less than gasoline.

Use of natural gas and methanol can reduce emissions of reactive hydrocarbons, the key ingredients in urban smog formation, by about 50 per cent compared with pollution discharged from the tailpipes of conventional automobiles. Advanced technology offers hope of reductions of greater than 90 per cent. Both alternative fuels virtually eliminate noxious soot and smoke from diesel engine exhausts, and natural gas has the added benefit of dramatically reducing carbon monoxide emissions by over 95 per cent in some cases.

Several countries, notably Italy, New Zealand, Canada and the United States, have undertaken programmes to encourage the use of natural gas vehicles. About 300,000 cars in Italy and about 11 per cent of the cars in New Zealand have been converted to run on natural gas. The US is also promoting the use of pure methanol as an automotive fuel. About 600 of the world's 800 methanol vehicles operate in the US.

nuclear

Decommissioning nuclear facilities

Vienna (IAEA)—In the years ahead, the nuclear industry will be increasingly concerned with decommissioning existing nuclear facilities. Worldwide, some 143 nuclear facilities in 17 countries are at some stage of decommissioning, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) predicts that 64 nuclear reactors and 256 research reactors could become candidates for decommissioning by the year 2000. IAEA has been compiling data and drawing up guidelines for what they hope will be a safe, albeit lengthy, process.

Taking an industrial plant out of service for good—a process generally called decommissioning—is an everyday activity. Plants and buildings wear out, become obsolete, or become too costly to maintain. Many simply are demolished or taken apart. But others are cleaned up, overhauled and adapted for other, not necessarily industrial, uses.

The radioactive materials and structures involved in nuclear decommissioning projects present extra challenges. But according to IAEA, about 85 per cent of a nuclear power plant never becomes radioactive and can be dismantled or removed using conventional methods.

Moreover, almost all of the radioactivity is contained in the spent nuclear fuel and its associated waste. The remaining plant parts are cleaned of radioactivity sometimes using robotic tools during the decontamination phase. After dismantling, these parts are packed and shipped for disposal at radioactive waste facilities.

A major problem is the fact that it can take hundreds and even thousands of years for radioactive material to break down to the point where it no longer poses a threat to human health and the environment. It is difficult for even the most optimistic engineer to ensure the safety of these facilities for such an extended period.

Be that as it may, countries have, with the help of IAEA, built a base of technical experience for future decommissioning projects. Nuclear industry experts believe that the technology, methods and expertise exist to complete the tasks and protect the environment, workers and the public.

training

UNITAR sets up new US base

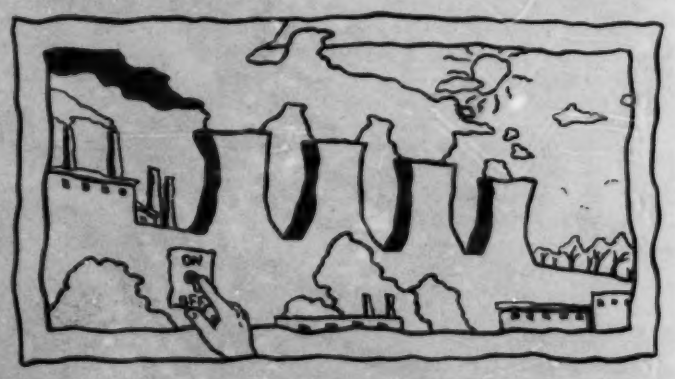
In one of the most ambitious, innovative moves in its 25-year history, the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) is negotiating the opening of an international training centre for diplomats and other key government specialists in Atlanta, Georgia, in the USA.

One proposal is the construction of a state-of-the-art facility near Emory University, not far from the Carter Presidential Center and downtown Atlanta's bustling business district. A sizeable endowment fund is being sought for the project, which has strong support from Atlanta Mayor Maynard Jackson, Georgia Governor Joe Frank Harris and influential members of the local academic and business communities.

Since it was founded in 1965, UNITAR has trained some 12,000 people, most of them diplomats and other officials from developing nations. In addition, some 23,000 have attended UNITAR research seminars and international conferences. The Institute's goal is to help these persons make better use of the UN and its agencies and function better in the increasingly complex arena of international affairs.

Since 1968, UNITAR has issued more than 200 publications, most of them the product of research projects on subjects ranging from marine pollution and transfer of petrochemical technology to peace-making strategies, external debt management and the "brain drain".

With the opening of its Atlanta centre in mid-1991, UNITAR will become the first UN institution to have a substantial presence in the US outside of New York City and Washington.



environment/ development

Giving shape to 1992 Environment Conference

Nairobi—At the first of four preparatory committee (PrepCom) meetings for the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), delegates struggled to give shape to an international agenda designed to address the problems of protecting the environment while, at the same time, promoting sustainable development.

Delegates met here for four weeks in August to set priorities for the enviromental issues that concern the international community. Only after the problems have been defined can solutions be discussed.

The conference, which is to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, is expected to be the largest UN gathering and may launch several international treaties such as one on global warming drawn up at the World Climate Conference (WCC) in Geneva in October *(see related story on this page)*. The WCC hopes to have a final agreement ready for heads of state to sign in Rio in 1992.

The PrepCom also considered suggestions to establish a single general global fund to promote environment and development or perhaps special funds to combat specific problems such as the gradual rise in global temperature. UNCED also plans to draw up "Agenda 21", an agenda for the survival of the planet, perhaps in the form of an "Earth Charter".

The secretariat suggested that specific treaties could be drawn up in certain areas either under existing international organizations or through the UNCED itself. For example, governments could sign agreements in 1992 to ban specific environmentally destructive practices, take action against offenders, and commit countries to activities that protect the environment.

Examples of such specific areas made by the secretariat included making companies or countries liable for dumping hazardous waste outside their national boundaries and additionally to make them pay for the damage caused. This agreement could be drawn up by UNCED or by extending the existing 1989 Basle Convention, which set guidelines for the transport of hazardous wastes between countries.

The secretariat suggested that new treaties could be drawn up on the conservation of biological diversity, ownership of indigenous germplasm as a protection for developing countries where the germplasm originates, and the management of toxic chemicals.

Transfer of technology

One of the most contentious issues in Nairobi was the transfer of environmentally friendly technology from developed countries to developing countries.

Industrialization, for example, plays a key role in economic development in most countries but unfortunately many industrial processes pollute and destroy the environment. The least destructive of these technologies are often owned by private companies in developed countries simply because they have the financial resources and best research capabilities.

UNCED hopes to set up mechanisms that will allow the transfer of these technologies to developing countries. While developed countries such as the US have said that they are willing to share technology that exists in the public domain, they have said that they want to ensure that companies that have privately developed environmentally good technologies should not have to give away the fruits of their research but be allowed to sell them.

Other countries like Algeria have pointed out that technologies in the public domain are generally old, obsolete and environmentally unfriendly. They want developed countries to set up a fund for developing countries to buy new environmentally friendly technologies or to offer their private companies incentives, such as tax breaks, to transfer technology to developing countries.

On the other hand, other organizations such as the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), have suggested that governments could pool technologies for mutual benefit. A WMO spokesperson gave the example of such an existing system in which all governments contribute meteorological information to global databases that all of them can access to help in weather forecasting.

Another promising suggestion put before the delegates was an offer by the Japanese government to host a research institute dedicated to technology transfer, to be run by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), in the Kansai region of Japan.

The next two meetings of UNCED's PrepCom will be held in Geneva next year in March/April and September/October. By that time the secretariat hopes to have detailed information on each item on its agenda. Then there will be a final UNCED PrepCom meeting in New York in January/February 1992 before the June conference in Rio.

Stepping on toes

Delegates in Nairobi also cautioned the UNCED secretariat to be careful about stepping on the toes of other international organizations that are already working in the areas under consideration. Some countries were also defensive of international organizations working in these areas because of their influence in those organizations, while others, realizing that they were at a disadvantage in those organizations, wanted to shift negotiations to UNCED.

One example of this was the issue of global warming. Developed countries want the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to discuss this issue because they have more influence there, while developing countries want UNCED to play a larger role.

There was agreement, however, that UNCED could contribute to these organizations by reviewing their work and making suggestions if they are not paying sufficient attention to either the environment or sustainable development. To this end, and that of drawing up new treaties, the delegates asked the secretariat to prepare some 70 reports for their next meeting. UNCED plans to do this with the help of research fellows, drawn mainly from the developing countries.

Another activity that will be taking place parallel to the PrepCom discussions will be prepa[illegible]on of national reports on the history, current activities and problems faced on environment and development. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) has already said it will help several developing countries with finance and technical expertise to prepare their reports.

Pratap Chatterjee

Note: See also p.20 for discussion of NGO role in UNCED.

Artists get together at green exhibit

New York (UNEP)—Some of America's best-known artists were drawn together for a special exhibit sponsored by UNEP at the Society of Illustrators Museum in New York from 2 to 31 October.

The show highlighted "The Illustrator and the Enviroment: Art for Survival". Because of their extraordinary ability to illustrate ideas and inspire action, the works of these artists depict not only the threats to our common home but also the beauty and awe-inspiring wonder of our planet.

Among the 150 artists who participated were Jean-Michel Folon, Guy Billout, Milton Glaser, Seymour Chwast and Paul Davis. Besides speaking out with their art, each illustrator had written a $100 cheque to Earth Island Institute to help its 22 activist groups, including the Climate Protection Institute, International Marine Mammal Project and the US/USSR Environmental Exchange.

The artworks were expected to be collected in a book and to travel to colleges and universities around North America.

Negotiating development and environment problems with the North

New York (UNDP)—Taking a strong regional stand on balancing development needs with environmental protection, a group of prominent scientists and political leaders from Latin America and the Caribbean stated that success will depend upon debt alleviation and environmentally-sound technology sharing by the rich countries of the North, combined with reforms of income distribution and more attention to poverty in the poorer countries.

Our Own Agenda,* the report of the Latin American and Caribbean Commission on Development and Environment, marks the first of several initiatives expected to highlight regional concerns and is part of regional preparations for the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, to be held in Brazil.

The Commission and the report were sponsored by UNDP and the Inter-American Development Bank, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and UNEP.

Latin America has both particular strengths which it can offer the rest of the world and particular needs that must be met in cooperation with industrialized countries, according to the report.

But there are also nearly 200 million people living in poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean, and a growing problem with mega-cities.

The *1990 Economic Panorama of Latin America*,** published by ECLAC, says the terms of trade of most of the countries of the region continue to be depresssed. Only limited and insufficient progress has been made in tackling the problem of the debt overhang, access to fresh financing continues to be severely restricted and, far from having been solved, the problems of protectionism in the industrialized world persist.

Meanwhile, the Commission report notes that industrialized countries have built much of their wealth by taking resources from the developing countries in a way that created environmental problems. It is up to the industrialized countries to take measures to restore the balance, the report continues.

Included in the report is a 13-point agenda of the principal problems to be negotiated with the North. Among them, a commitment to peace and world disarmament, forging a new economic relationship, attacking poverty at its roots, handling global environmental problems, changing consumption patterns in the North, handling the drug issue and rethinking population policies.

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* *English and Spanish copies of* Our Own Agenda *are available from the Office of Publications, Inter-American Development Bank, 1300 New York Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20577, USA. Tel. (202) 623-1753; Fax (202) 789-2835.*

** Economic Panorama of Latin America 1990 *is available from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, United Nations Building, P.O. Box 179-D, Santiago, Chile.*

'Is your wardrobe earth-friendly?'

New York (UNEP)—"You're earth-friendly", Women's Wear Daily said. "You check the label on your apparel to make sure it isn't environmentally damaging. You're doing your part . . . right?"

Not if you're in the fashion industry, according to WWD, which covered the first green get-together in the apparel industry. Sponsored by the Fashion Group International Foundation, the seminar "Only One Earth: A Conversation about Fashion and the Environment" was hosted by UNEP at the United Nations and featured fashion leaders whose environmental commitment is central both to their products and to their profitability.

"We [in the fashion industry] think we're good people because we're using cotton and natural fibres", said award-winning designer Katharine Hamnett of London. "But, for a number of reasons we're among the worst offenders of the environment." For one, the pesticides used in Third World countries that harvest cotton are among the most harmful chemicals developed. She urged a cotton-awareness campaign that could lead to the harvest of green cotton, grown with limited use of pesticides.

Anita Roddick, founder of The Body Shop, an international cosmetics company, said she pays Third World countries First World prices for their ingredients and has developed a line of products derived from plants harvested—and replanted—in the Brazilian rainforest.

Kevin Sweeney, of Patagonia Inc., said the California-based company donates 10 per cent of its pre-tax profits to environmental groups—about $1 million this year.

New economic yardsticks needed

Gross national product (GNP)—the most widely used economic indicator in the world—is increasingly being criticized as an outmoded and flawed barometer of progress. Some critics argue that only if nations change the ways they compute wealth and economic progress—to take the state of the environment into account—can they hope to stem planet-wide environmental degradation.

"The environment and the economy are tightly interwoven", says Sandra Postel, vice president of Worldwatch Institute, based in Washington, D.C. "Yet current accounting conventions almost completely divorce the two."

"Progress", she says, "is not only

perpetuating environmental deterioration, but accelerating it. When trees are cut and sold for timber, for instance, the proceeds count toward income and are added to the GNP. But economists fail to figure in deterioration of the forest, even though it generates income and helps to maintain the biological support systems upon which the economy depends. Likewise, the Alaskan oil spill of March 1989—the most environmentally damaging accident in US history—pumped up the GNP by nearly $2 billion, thanks to high clean-up costs."

Postel argues for the use of new economic yardsticks that more accurately reflect the value of natural resources as well as the living conditions of a country's citizens. The United Nations has recently developed a "Human Development Index" derived from measures of life expectancy, literacy and purchasing power.

Investment criteria can also be reshaped to encourage sustainable development. Economic systems operating under the no-net-loss principle would ban projects that destroy forests, drain wetlands or pave over croplands unless additional investments compensate for the resource damaged or lost.

"Green taxes" appear to be another promising way of making private decisions take environmental costs into account—by systematically taxing economic activities that pollute, deplete or otherwise degrade the environment.

climate

Global warming a 'certainty'

Geneva (WMO/UNEP)—A scientific report has concluded "with certainty" that the Earth is warming up faster than at any time in the past 10,000 years; that there will be largely incalculable but probably dire results if greenhouse gases are not curbed, and that the sooner governments deal with this, the better.

These and other conclusions are the fruit of a 20-month investigation of global warming by more than 1,000 of the world's leading atmospheric experts, the first authoritative scientific assessment of global climate change to emerge from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) meeting in Sundsvall, Sweden. The panel was established in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

"The findings of the IPCC are the most authoritative to date", said UNEP executive director Mostafa K. Tolba, who is a scientist. "The reports leave little doubt that the longer uncontrolled greenhouse gas emissions continue, the more difficult and the more costly the inevitable control and adaptation measures will be."

If a scenario of "business as usual" is pursued, the scientists predict, average temperatures may rise by three-tenths of a degree Celsius every decade and by up to 3 degrees Celsius before the end of the next century. Then sea level is likely to rise about 20 cm in 40 years, and by 65 cm by the end of the 21st century. Should that happen, coral islands and low-lying coastal areas will face catastrophe. Rapid sea-level rise will also change coastal ecology and threaten many important fisheries.

The IPCC First Assessment report—consisting of the IPCC Overview, the Policymakers Summaries of the three working groups (on science, impacts and response strategies) and the Special Committee on the Participation of Developing Countries, and the reports of the working groups—is to be highlighted at the Second World Climate Conference (Geneva, 29 October to 7 November).

WMO and UNEP will jointly hold the first negotiating session on a Framework Convention on Climate Change, Washington, D.C., February 1991.

development

LDCs and donors at an impasse

It started off well. French president François Mitterrand opened the conference with the announcement that his government was cancelling the debts of the least developed countries (LDCs) and increasing its aid by almost a third. The Dutch followed up with a similar proposal. But LDC hopes that significant progress would be made when they met with their main donors for the first time in 10 years in Paris last August steadily deteriorated from there.

Later in the conference, which was hosted by the French government and organized by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Britain also made a concession saying that in future LDCs could spend all of their aid on local costs or purchases in other poor countries. Normally most countries require that some of the aid is spent on donor country products. The conference also heard commitments of extra funds from the UN Development Programme and the UN Capital Development Fund.

But the two-week meeting stalled as other donor countries refused effectively to increase aid efforts. Sam Daws, a representative for the non-governmental Quaker United Nations Office, said: "The LDCs and the developed countries simply have two different sets of priorities."

At a meeting earlier this year the LDC ministers had put together a declaration in which they acknowledged that they bore the main responsibility for their own development, but insisted that the international community pitch in by increasing aid flows, forgiving LDC debt and offering them more favourable trade terms.

However, most donor countries at the conference were reluctant to commit themselves to this and emphasized instead the issue of LDCs being primarily responsible for development, calling for more private enterprise and keeping environmental problems in check. They also refused to discuss trade issues, saying that they should be left to institutions like the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

The meeting was salvaged to a certain extent on the last day with a face-saving package designed by Jan Pronk, the Dutch minister for development cooperation, who coordinated the aid discussions.

Under the deal, the donor countries were divided into four groups according to their present aid efforts and commitments for the future. Thus the Scandinavian countries, which have exceeded the commitment they made at the first LDC conference in 1981, were placed in the top category, while the US, which has fallen far short of the 1981 goal and steadfastly refuses to commit to increases, is in the bottom category.

While the countries have really not committed to doing more than they were doing in the past, the agreement does commit each of them to an individual target. "Now everybody's part of the deal, we expect the menu for the meal will have some meat in it", Pronk said.

NGOs which lobbied on behalf of the LDCs reflected general LDC dissatisfaction with the deal. In a statement put together at the end of the conference, they said: "The NGOs consider that they have been heard, but not really understood, since the action programme contains only a small part of their proposals."

By definition the LDCs fulfil three criteria—a literacy rate of less than 20 per cent, a GDP of less than $427 per person, and a manufacturing output of less than 10 per cent of the country's total GDP. There are 41 LDCs today, 28 of which are in Africa, 10 more than there were in 1981. And the UN has just agreed to consider Namibia's application to join their ranks.

At the first LDC conference, countries agreed that LDCs should pursue an economic growth target for LDCs of 7.2 per cent a year. But instead growth declined from an average of 3.4 per cent to 2.2 per cent, less than the average increase in population.

Some reasons for this may include the fact that donor countries actually donated only three-fifths of what they promised, while the LDCs' debts doubled over the last 10 years. The LDCs' share of international trade has also plummeted in recent decades. Population increases have meant that effectively the average person in an LDC only got a 20 per cent increase in aid.

Now, with the crisis in the Gulf, they expect things will get worse. According to projections made by UNCTAD at the conference, they will have to pay out an additional $0.44 billion this year and $92 billion next year if oil prices settle at $25 a barrel. At $30 a barrel, they would pay out twice this.

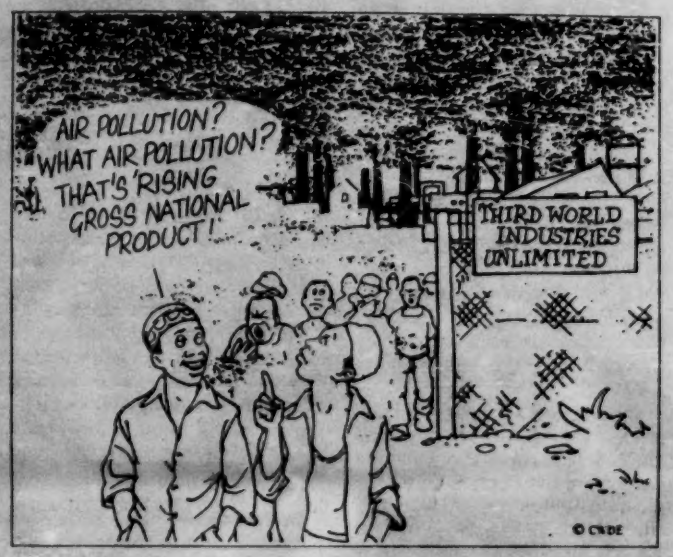
This is accentuated by the fact that their import bills are already twice as high as their export earnings. For countries like Togo, where oil imports accounted for 27.1 per cent of its total import bill in 1988, this could precipitate a major crisis.

P.C.

pollution

Technology rethink urged for Asia/Pacific region

Bangkok (UNIS)—Deteriorating water quality throughout most of the Asia/Pacific region is calling attention to what may well be a most powerful tragic irony of this decade—many of the technologies which have so far contributed to the region's rapid economic development are now being identified as among the most environmentally damaging.



The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), in its latest survey of the environment, calls such technologies "inappropriate". But their use is now so well entrenched that any significant change will require substantial amounts of time, money and effort.

For instance, widespread agrochemical use (up to 50,000 tonnes of chemical fertilizer a year) is now accepted as a major source of river pollution. Rapid industrialization, touted as an essential aspect of economic growth, has brought with it massive pollution and urbanization, with the latter dumping enormous quantities of waste matter into the water. At sea, the race to achieve economic, and hence political, strength in a highly competitive environment has been a major contributor to growing near-shore and deep-sea overfishing. Coastal systems, particularly wetlands, mangroves and corals, are degrading fast largely because agricultural, industrial and urban pollution is washed down into them.

In response, ESCAP hopes to develop an ideal scenario for environment-friendly development and then help member countries work towards it. The immediate goal would be to help governments manage the region's water resources better so as to maintain their quality. A crucial aspect would be to introduce a whole new array of technologies which would promote development without damaging water quality.

For example, farmers might need to relearn some of their traditional practices which could then be married to such techniques as low-chemical integrated pest management.

Industry, meanwhile, would need to be encouraged to adopt new "clean technologies" which aim to prevent pollution at source rather than merely capturing it once it has been produced. City dwellers may need to adopt new codes of behaviour that would minimize individual waste creation. Municipalities, too, which at present can provide sanitation to only four out of 10 Asian city dwellers, would need to be given the institutional and financial muscle to handle wastes effectively.

cooperation

New South-South trade centre

Kuala Lumpur—A clearing-house for information on trade and investment among developing countries is being set up in this Malaysian capital as part of an intensive programme to spur South-South cooperation.

The $4-million Investment, Trade and Technology Centre (SITTDEC) was approved at a summit for South-South consultations and cooperation (the G-15) meeting.

Another project adopted at the G-15 summit—a trade financing facility mechanism among Southern countries—involves payment arrangements to exporters in the event of default by importers. Malaysia and Venezuela have signed bilateral agreements in that regard.

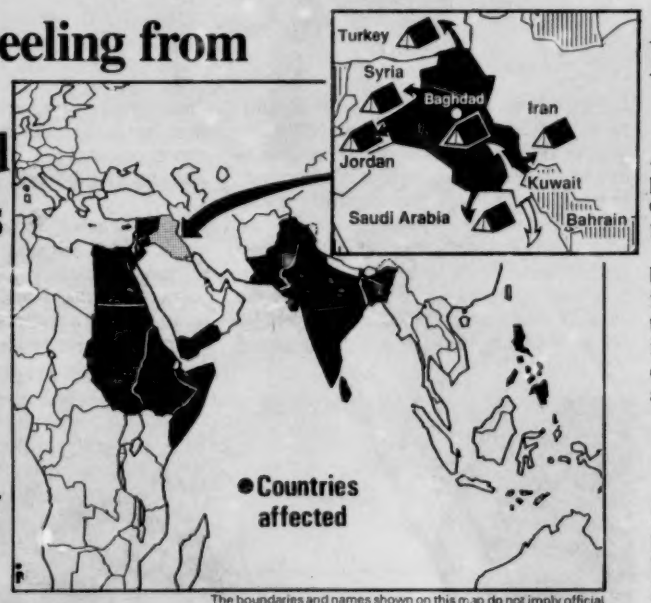
Malaysia also planned to enter into similar arrangements with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Peru in Latin America. In Africa, the government has taken steps to have such arrangements with Algeria, Botswana, Egypt, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

In Asia, Malaysia has extended the concept—already in place in Iran—to Iraq, Burma and Pakistan. **IPS**

Population Perspectives

Jordan reeling from wave of displaced migrants

by Nick van Hear



The boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

All the problems of mass displacement in the Middle East—the plight of the Palestinians and Kurds and the controversial movement to Israel of Soviet Jews—have been eclipsed by the mass exodus of migrant workers from the Persian Gulf.

Accurate figures are hard to come by, but it is thought that the oil boom had attracted six million foreign workers to the Gulf in the 1980s. Migrants from poorer Arab countries and displaced Palestinians were joined by workers from the Indian subcontinent, South-East Asia and Africa.

In several Gulf states expatriates made up not just the bulk of the workforce, but the majority of the population. Expatriate workers in Iraq and Kuwait may have accounted for more than one-third of the total in the region.

Most who have fled since the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq on 2 August have passed through Jordan. As of 16 October, over 700,000 third-country nationals had returned to their countries of origin. A large proportion were Egyptians without families who left for home almost immediately.

Most returning Jordanians were absorbed within their own society. A large number from the Indian subcontinent and South-East Asia, often with their families, had no means of getting home; they had to be accommodated in camps *(see World Food Programme interview, page 1)*.

The exodus to Jordan began to ease between 2 September and 10 October. By then relief was better organized and air transport was arranged for over 100,000 persons by the Geneva-based International Organization for Migration (IOM), which had been requested by the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator to assume a lead role in external transport for the displaced.

The repatriation of migrants from Jordan seems to have been a considerable achievement. Early Jordanian anxiety that it might take up to five months to organize flights for all those who flooded into the camps—particularly for those from poor countries like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka—proved unfounded. That the number in camps was reduced from 110,000 at its peak to fewer than 35,000 by mid-September is a testament to the efficiency of the evacuation effort by land and air.

Fears of a further mass exodus are well-founded. Those migrants who could not leave Kuwait directly to their homelands or via Jordan, Turkey or Iran moved to camps in and around Baghdad, awaiting evacuation from the Iraqi capital. Late in September 60,000 Asians were reported to be in transit camps around Baghdad. Conditions there varied—some were said to be guarded by heavily armed Iraqi security forces and with little food or facilities.

Economic impact

The prospects for those yet to leave are not good. Families used to receiving remittances from relatives working abroad will suffer substantially. Those returning will find it hard to get work in countries already having high unemployment. Social services will be put under greater strain.

The impact of the exodus on Jordan is difficult to assess. While the international community will foot some of the bill, Jordan's weak economy will be put under still greater strain. Among the arrivals were more than 100,000 Jordanians, representing a substantial loss in the remittances on which the Jordanian economy depends. Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan estimated that the conflict in the Gulf could cost the country 50 per cent of its GNP. And this was before Saudi Arabia cut off oil supplies.

Life for Palestinians in the territories occupied by Israel will be much harder. Families have relied heavily on remittances from relatives working in Kuwait. The outlook for others is likewise grim. Pakistan and Bangladesh will suffer heavily from the loss of remittances. So will the Philippines.

Of still greater concern are those who have no home—people whose countries are in turmoil, such as Tamils from Sri Lanka, and exiles from the Horn of Africa—Sudanese, Somalis, Ethiopians and Eritreans.

If tension in the region rises further, a second wave of people could flee the conflict zone. They will be joined by increasing numbers of Iraqis and Kuwaitis seeking asylum.

Few countries in the region would accept more displaced people. Jordan has been commended for its relief effort and has prepared for another influx. But it cannot be expected to sustain another large population of evacuees for long. GEMINI □

Nicholas van Hear is HRH Crown Prince Hassan bin Talal of Jordan Research Fellow at the Refugee Studies Programme, Queen Elizabeth House, the University of Oxford. He has written widely on refugee, migration and development issues.

Malaysia and Singapore: more is better

In complete contrast to their South-East Asian neighbours, Malaysia and Singapore are involved in a feverish—and controversial—campaign to encourage families to have more children.

In Malaysia, the national family planning board is now known as the population and family planning board. Convinced that fertility reduction has gone too far, neighbouring Singapore went one step further by disbanding its family planning board altogether.

by P. Prashanth

Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad is personally seeing to the implementation of a controversial policy aimed to increase his resource-rich country's population to 70 million by 2100 from the present 17 million.

Mahathir introduced what is known as the "70 million national population policy" in 1984 when the population stood at 14 million. Apparently, the goal is economic independence through the development of a large domestic market. Mahathir believes that multiracial Malaysia has too small a population for its land size.

In the tiny island-republic of Singapore, controversial measures are being implemented to reverse low rates of marriage and childbearing among well-educated women.

Concerned that Singapore's fertility rate dropped to the lowest level in Asia in 1982, the government retreated from one of the most successful birth control programmes in the world.

Singapore officials now warn that 50,000 births annually must be achieved consistently to turn demographic trends around. "If births drop, the current population of 2.6 million will start shrinking precariously in 2010 and nosedive towards eventual extinction", said an official of the population planning unit responsible for developing and implementing Singapore's new population policies.

Singapore's fertility rate—the average number of children a woman is expected to have—currently stands at 1.75, below that needed to keep the republic's population level steady.

The government is counting on the auspicious portents of the current "Year of the Horse" to reverse the trend. "According to Chinese belief, this is supposed to be a good year", said health minister Yeo Cheow Tong, who revealed recently that the 1989 "Year of the Snake" recorded a gloomy 10 per cent drop in births. IPS □

Tanzania

A land of 'child mothers'

Dar es Salaam—Despite repeated warnings by government and the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi party, child marriages are going on at an "alarming" rate in Tanzania, according to experts.

Statistics show that more than 50 per cent of Tanzania's children start sex before reaching the age of 16, the marriage age under the East African nation's laws. More than 42,000 children, half of them girls, leave school every year to marry. At this rate, experts say, the country may in the next few years become a land of "child mothers". By the year 2000, 83.5 per cent of Tanzania's population will be children between the ages of 15-20, says Beatrice Nalingingwa, an officer with the Family Planning Association of Tanzania (UMATI).

Experts say lack of seriousness in child upbringing, the governmental ban on sex education and imitated lifestyles in Africa are some of the problems affecting Tanzanian children.

Furthermore, while early marriage is taboo, parents want to get rich quicker through dowry. Kulwa Shija, a peasant from the Lake Victoria region, says he can get more than 40 cows if his daughter marries before the age of 15.

The ministry of education, with the assistance of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), is studying the problem. Education minister Amrani Mayagila is optimistic a solution will be reached. "But this heavily depends on parents as guardians", he emphasized.

Another way to get around the child pregnancies, suggests Gottlieb Mpangile, UMATI's director of operations, is to distribute condoms in schools. "Even if we introduce [sex] education, there is no guarantee that the problem will be solved."

by Paul Chintowa

But teachers and the clergy argue that distribution of condoms in schools is against the norms of the country and will increase prostitution among children.

Minister Mayagila says government is considering reintroducing "family life education", which it banned in the 1970s, arguing that it was not "necessary" in the social life of the country's children.

But while family life education may be taught again, the country lacks clear policies to safeguard children. Economic difficulties, too, have prompted many parents to look for side incomes to meet the essential needs of their families, leaving them with little time to look after their children. IPS □

Asia's troubled miracles

The spectacular growth of Asia's newly industrialized countries —Taiwan, the Republic of Korea and the city states of Singapore and Hong Kong— may have reached its limits. After decades of 8-9 per cent annual growth and sensational trade surpluses, their economies are now shrinking. Higher wages and oil prices, speculation and protectionism are taking their toll. A controversial analysis of the current crisis says the Asian Dragons may not be the free-market paradigm they are made out to be.

Celebrated by orthodox economists as models for Third World development, the miracle economies of the Republic of Korea, Taiwan and Singapore—the so-called NICs or "newly industrializing countries"—are entering a period of crisis.

The stock market collapse in both Taiwan and Korea earlier this year is but the most dramatic sign of the crisis. Even more serious are the irreversible wave of protectionism against NIC exports, labour unrest, agriculture in decline, and environmental degradation as a result of unregulated industrialization.

Perhaps most troubling for NIC technocrats is the "structural squeeze": their economies are losing their cheap labour advantage to South-East Asian rivals like Thailand and Indonesia and may be unable to make the transition to high-technology based production.

by Walden Bello and Stephanie Rosenfeld

True, these economies continue to exhibit growth rates of 7 to 10 per cent a year, but that may be behind them now.

The NICs emerged as economies specializing in the export of labour-intensive commodities in an era of the world economy that is now drawing to a close. This period, which began with the end of the Second World War, was marked by the overwhelming economic dominance of the United States.

Three factors in particular accounted for the NICs' spectacular ascent over the past three decades:

The Alliance with the US. The NICs hitched their growth to the most prosperous market in the world at a time that the US was the champion of a liberal international trading order. At the same time, the Cold War alliance with the US allowed Taiwan and Korea to follow economic policies that the US overlooked in the interest of preserving its political partnerships in the region.

Thus, economic planners in Korea were able to build up one of the world's most protectionist regimes, both in terms of markets and foreign investment, at a time that the US, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were telling the rest of the Third World to end their restrictions on imports and foreign capital. Directed by government planners, Korea's protected domestic market provided a secure base from which the *chaebol*, or conglomerates, launched their drive for foreign markets in the late sixties and seventies.

The Japan Connection. Being former colonies of Japan, Taiwan and Korea were endowed with relatively well-developed educational and physical infrastructures before they began their industrialization efforts in the 1950s. Even more important, the old colonial and cultural ties made Taiwan and Korea the prime choice for relocation for Japanese investors seeking to escape the rising costs of Japanese labour in the 1960s and 1970s. And as Taiwanese and Korean industrialization took off in the 1970s and 1980s, Japan provided a significant portion of the machinery, components and technology that NIC producers needed to turn out toys, bicycles, television sets, computers, cars and semiconductors.

Command Capitalism. Contrary to the myth perpetuated by orthodox economists, the NICs are not classical free-market economies but "command" economies—the capitalist variety, that is, in which the state has played a central role in virtually all aspects of economic life.

In this system, not only did the technocrats drive the price of labour below its market value, but they did not hesitate to employ subsidies, preferential access to credit and other market-violating measures to move the economy along preferred paths.

Export success, not efficient resource allocation, was the overriding goal of the technocrats, and if the market stood in the way of export success, so much the worse for the market.

By the late eighties, however, a combination of external and internal developments began to unravel the NIC model. Rising protectionism in the NICs' main Western markets was blunting the growth of NIC exports even as they continued to post multibillion dollar trade deficits with Japan, on whom they were dependent for critical technology and basic machinery and intermediate inputs.

Labour took advantage of limited democratization to challenge an economic strategy based on cheap labour. In Korea, workers launched over 7,000 strikes between 1987 and 1990, revealing how very little legitimacy was enjoyed by the strategy of export-oriented growth. "Late democratization" in both Taiwan and Korea was leading not to the forging of a new consensus on economic policy but to a politics of polarized struggle over the benefits of past growth.

Long squeezed to provide workers, resources and capital for export-oriented industrialization, agriculture entered into an irreversible crisis in the 1980s. With the rural population dropping to slightly over 20 per cent in both countries and the suicide rate among farmers soaring in Korea, the crisis seemed to affect every sector of society.

Rise of protectionism

Farmers launched militant protests when they realized that the *quid pro quo* for the continued entry of NIC-manufactured goods into the US would be the dismantling of the barriers to US agricultural surpluses, resulting in the rapid disappearance of the vital non-rice sectors of the agricultural economy.

The environment was in an advanced state of decay in both Korea and Taiwan as high-speed growth telescoped into three decades of ecological destruction that took much longer to unfold in earlier industrializing societies. By 1990, the lower reaches of most of Taiwan's rivers were severely polluted, much of Korea's tap water was contaminated with heavy metals like mercury and cadmium, and the environmental debacle in Taiwan rivalled that of Eastern Europe.

But perhaps the greatest threat to the continued viability of export-led growth is the inability of the NICs to graduate from being cheap-labour based economies to being high-tech economies.

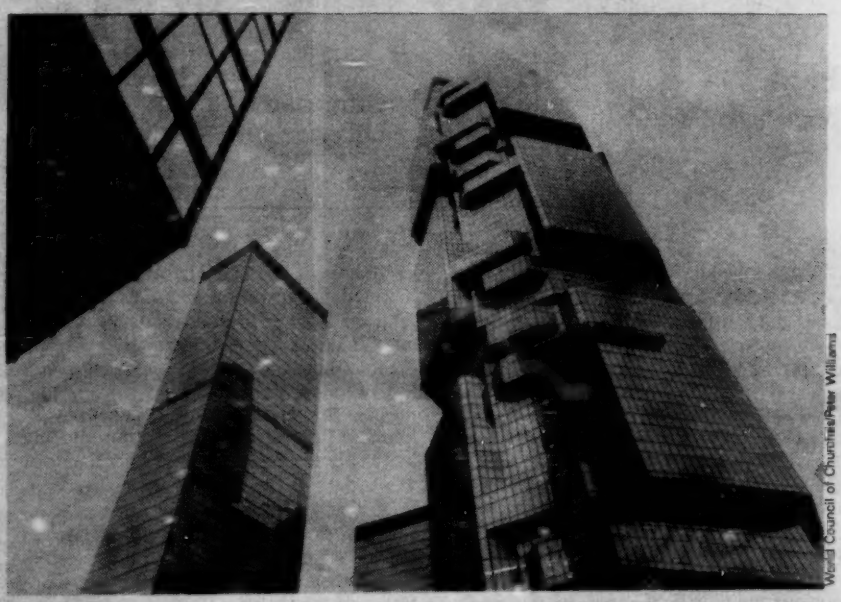
Despite much talk about the NICs' ability to make the transition to high tech, Taiwan and Korea have not been able to develop an indigenous capability to innovate technologically. Taiwan essentially remains a low-cost cloner of IBM personal computers and Korea remains heavily dependent on Japanese high technology and components. For instance, 85 per cent of the value of a Korean colour television and 90 per cent of the value of a Korean laptop computer are accounted for by Japanese components. Competitors Samsung, Daewoo and Lucky Goldstar turn out videocassette recorders, but all on license from one company: the Japanese corporation JVC, which is a subsidiary of Matsushita.

Government research and development in 1988 came to only 0.4 per cent of GNP, a level even lower than that of Taiwan. As for private research and development, it is now clear that in the 1980s, the bulk of investments made by the *chaebol* did not go to funding technological innovation but to speculation in stocks and real estate.

Despite three decades of high-speed growth, the NICs remain basically dependent on cheap labour, and that advantage has been perhaps irrevocably lost to lower-cost South-East Asian producers. In 1989, for instance, the average hourly wage of a textile operator was $3.56 in Taiwan and $2.87 in Korea, compared with 40 cents in China and 23 cents in Indonesia. In short, the NICs are being squeezed from above, by high-tech producers, and from below, by the cheap-labour economies.

The unique external and internal factors that allowed Korea, Taiwan and Singapore to rise dramatically in the world economic system in recent years no longer exist. Still, these formerly underdeveloped economies hold fast to their old strategy of high-speed export-oriented growth and risk falling back into the Third World in the 1990s.

Apprehensive about their future economic health, Singaporeans, Taiwanese and Koreans are actively discussing alternative economic paths. The debate, however, has yet to yield to a comprehensive new vision of an alternative mode of development.



World Council of Churches/Peter Williams

NIC performance has generated the highest standards of living in Asia and a modern industrial infrastructure, but with serious environmental side-effects.

Despite their unique configurations, it is increasingly clear that the NICs have fundamentally similar problems that call for a unified strategic response. Economic policies that pit efficiency against equity, or economic growth against a healthy environment, are obsolete. It is likely that the NICs will find that at this stage of their development the imperatives of economic effectiveness, ecological stability, equity and democracy may be more complementary than competitive.

Because the export-oriented strategy is unlikely to get the NICs through the 1990s, what is needed is a radically new model of development which will involve greater dependence on the internal market, moves to reverse the worsening distribution of income, a selective export policy emphasizing a narrower band of exports instead of competing with the Japanese across a whole range of commodities, and participation in creating regional blocs that would serve as a counterweight to Japanese economic power in the Asia-Pacific area.

Since the NICs are often held up as a model for the rest of the Third World—and there is no doubt the NIC experience does contain a lot of rich lessons for other developing countries—it is important to

learn the right lessons from their experience.

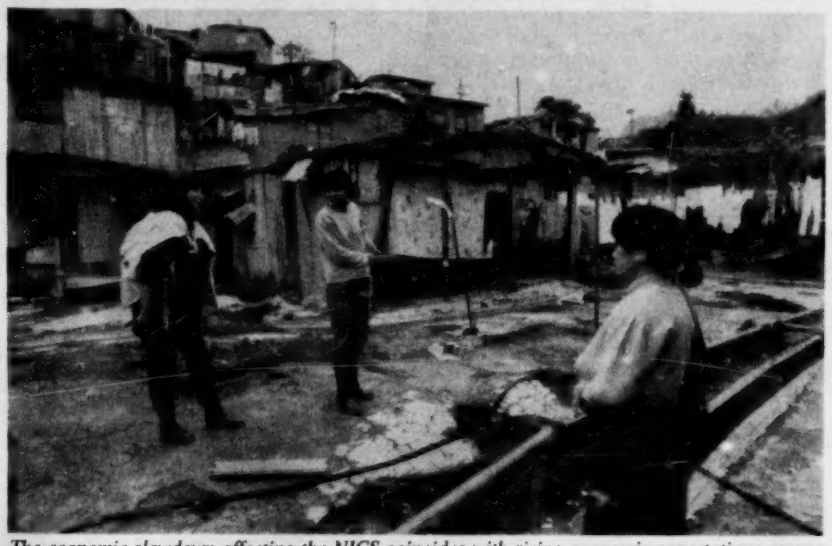
The aggressive pursuit of a strategy of export-oriented growth by stifling the domestic market with low wages, or making the economy wide open to foreign investment and manufactured imports from the advanced industrial countries are not wise policies but prescriptions for disasters in an increasingly protectionist world economy.

The positive lessons of the NICs lie elsewhere. One of the most important is the critical role successful land reform played in setting the stage for economic takeoff. Land reform in Taiwan and Korea was decisive compared with the weak, halfway reforms that have been attempted in the Philippines and in parts of Latin America.

Another important lesson revolves around the role of the state in the NICs. Contrary to free-market proponents, most Third World nations need more state intervention, not less. The NIC states have served prominently as the leading agents of economic development. Their effectiveness was in part measured by the extent to which they gained autonomy from traditional elites and from foreign agencies.

The Korean state, for example, is an interesting case study of pragmatic, as opposed to ideological, economic nationalism. Despite its anticommunist and pro-free market postures, it set out in practice to protect its domestic market and enacted some of the toughest restrictions on foreign investments of any nation.

As for the question of the key role of authoritarianism in NIC development, it might be argued that, had democracy come sooner to the NICs, their development would have been more balanced and more healthy. While this issue will be debated for a long time to come, it is difficult to dispute that the NICs made a tragic mistake in identifying the consolidation of a strong developmental state with the institutionalization of authoritarian rule. This was the same error made by those running the communist countries of Eastern Europe.



The economic slowdown affecting the NICS coincides with rising economic expectations among their populations.

When the NIC governments, like their counterpart command regimes in Eastern Europe, were finally forced to democratize, the legacy of years of accumulated resentment and distrust guaranteed that democratic processes would centre not on forging a new consensus on economic strategy but on waging a bitter struggle to redistribute economic and political power. Late democratization, while infinitely better than authoritarian rule, is nevertheless very costly from the perspective of long-term economic development.

Authoritarianism, then, ultimately weakens state leadership, whereas democratic accountability, no matter how "messy" initially, ultimately strengthens it. This "paradox" is arguably one of the valuable lessons that the Third World can derive from the NIC experience: that to be ultimately successful, a strategy for economic development must be democratically chosen, democratically planned, democratically implemented, and democratically modified. □

Walden Bello and Stephanie Rosenfeld are co-authors of the recently released book Dragons in Distress: Asia's Miracle Economies in Crisis *(Food First, 145 Ninth St., San Francisco, CA 94103. 1990, 428 pp. $12.95. Tel. orders: (415) 864-8555). Bello is also Executive Director of Food First.*

Korea: How one NIC got the knack

An interview with Byung-Nak Song

Byung-Nak Song, former head of the Industrial Policy Division of the Korean Development Institute, is presently Fair Trade Commissioner at the Korean Economic Planning Board and Professor of Economics at the Seoul National University. He is one of the leading economic planners responsible for export-oriented growth in Korea.

Pratap Chatterjee met him in Seoul and talked to him for *Development Forum* about the role of government in the Korean economic "miracle" that has been held up as a model for other developing countries to follow.

The government has played a large role in the direction of Korea's economic planning and development. Perhaps you could explain this model, sometimes called "command capitalism".

BNS: You know Confucian culture emphasizes the leading role of the government. At the same time the people in East Asia are ready to take a leadership role in government. Decisions and directives regarding economic policy come from agreement between both government and the private sector. Here in the Orient, government and business maintain very tight connections.

I believe that the government played two central roles: the government itself acted as entrepreneur and acted as a promoter of entrepreneurs. As Koreans believe strongly in education, it also heavily promoted human capital formation through education.

The implementation of liberalization policies has been a very careful process. At an appropriate level liberalization is very important. It's like a stick. The government cannot force Korean companies to increase productivity or efficiency unless they really feel the competition from foreign products. Then it becomes a life-or-death matter for them.

The government directed the credit system, export markets and set standards. How did this affect Korean businesses?

BNS: The Korean government provided positive incentives such as tax benefits for export industries and infrastructure facilities like transportation, communication and water to companies that listened to it. For example, most Korean export firms borrowed heavily from the government in keeping with its programme of forced growth. If business firms did not follow government suggestions then the government might demand immediate repayment of outstanding loans. This often caused the businesses to collapse.

Another tool was the tax system. Korean tax officials could conduct a year-long tax inspection if businesses did not follow their advice. The government could also disconnect telephone and water services.

The Korean economy is dominated by the* chaebol*—family businesses. What was their relationship with the government?

BNS: Because of the forced growth nature of government policy, the government tried to expand the size of the firms as quickly as possible, creating the *chaebol*. As of this April, the government labelled 54 families as *chaebol*—owners of the biggest companies in Korea.

The government tried to get the *chaebol* to specialize in one or two products like automobiles. Many of the *chaebol* would like to have manufactured automobiles but they were not given permission. In some cases the government tried to merge firms too.

Apart from high wages, which have soared since the right to strike was restored in 1987, the Korean economy is now said to suffer from two major problems—the lack of components and technology. Why has this happened?

BNS: We have followed a negative import substitution policy. If a firm makes something for export, say Korean eyeglasses, it can import all the parts. As a result our foreign debt increased rapidly until 1985 but after that we recorded double-digit growth. Now we have a trade surplus with the US because of our exports but we have a deficit with Japan from whom we import parts.

What have the social policies of the Korean government been in developing the economy?

BNS: As you know Korea is a very poor country as far as agriculture is concerned. There are many old people, so opening the markets involves a lot of social and political problems, and it must be done with care.

Government tried to reduce the price of what it calls public goods—bus fares, subway fares, electricity rates, costs of education and medicine. It also subsidized farm income, using a dual price system—purchasing rice from the farmer at one price and selling it to urban people at a lower price.

The government also tried to provide poor people with housing. We haven't enough money to provide everybody with houses. But as our income increases, people's expectations increase and there is a gap between perception and reality—their perception of democracy and the real ability of Korean people to have democracy.

What have some of the trade-offs in the rapid growth of the Korean economy been?

BNS: One important negative effect has been pollution—environmental deterioration. The government established an environmental agency recently and promoted a vice minister to minister last year to take charge of it. Also there are all sorts of accidents in the streets because we have so many vehicles now. There is a lack of hospital facilities and insurance programmes.

The World Bank and other institutions are now holding up Korea's success as a model for other countries to follow. How easy will it be for them to emulate you?

BNS: It's very difficult for a single individual to become rich. For a whole nation it's really difficult. It has to go through all sorts of social and political unrest and social instability.

I think the most important factor is education and training. Economic development is a process of learning, so if people are really eager and willing to learn then the country can succeed.

Korea also has another advantage—its people all started from scratch after the war—they were like beggars. They were also homogeneous, there were no racial problems. There was also a sense of economic urgency—the North Korean GNP was higher than ours—and we were constantly being harassed by them. As a country we had to compete with them and be prepared if they tried to invade the country. □

Professor Song has just published an account of South Korea's economic success titled The Rise of the Korean Economy *(Oxford University Press, 1990), the first English language book on the subject to be written by a Korean.*

Food aid for development

An interview with James Ingram

From page 1

in their lives. When possible, we encourage them to repatriate and we use food aid to encourage people to return to their homelands. Food for work and land rehabilitation programmes in Afghanistan, for example, are used as incentives to get people to return. We, the United Nations, have not done enough yet, but we have begun to address the problems of long-standing refugee populations.

DE *From its very inception the World Food Programme has been very aware of the negative impact that food aid can have on local food markets and cereal production. How has policy evolved over the years to minimize disruption of local market patterns?*

Ingram: We have carefully studied the impacts over the years. First, we make sure that food aid is only a supplement to existing production. In Ethiopia, for example, we provide food only during the lean periods before harvests. The volume has to be such as not to affect adversely local prices. Our development projects tend to be large and need appraisals in the design phase which have to be refined over the years to minimize impact on markets.

It's important to remember that the use of food aid is not any different from use of financial or technical assistance—all can create dependency. Popular knowledge regarding food aid, unfortunately, is based on "programme" food aid, which is food used for sale on the market, usually for balance-of-payments support. Many developing countries have grown dependent on food imports for their urban populations, and can't finance them. They are helped with bilateral food aid from donor countries. If you are supplying large quantities of, for example, wheat to a country that cannot economically grow that cereal, you can increase dependency.

DE *As a strong proponent of multilateral food aid, how do you discourage the use of this bilateral programme food aid?*

Ingram: Well, WFP currently handles about 3 million tonnes of the 12 million tonnes of global food aid. Most donors recognize that this multilateral food aid for development is a creative and productive way of using it. They can't create the same infrastructure that we have. Australia and Canada, for example, channel about half their food aid through WFP and some of the Nordic countries, the whole amount.

However, programme food aid, by using existing markets, does not require much of an infrastructure, and some bilateral donors find it easier to use that route. However, I believe that much more programme food aid should be delivered on a multilateral basis so as to integrate it better into the development plans of recipient countries.

It's clear also that we need a multilateral organization to ensure that all the genuine needs are met. This is especially so in relation to disasters. It's inevitable that each government will choose to support disasters that have a relatively high media profile at home. The trouble is that there are many situations which have little or no profile and can get ignored by bilaterals. What I'd like to see is far more multilateral food aid, especially in the area of emergency food aid, where a lot is still handled bilaterally.

DE *WFP has been very creative in its experiments to make food aid work as a tool for development. The present strategy revolves around food for work and triangular transactions, the WFP's purchase of food in one developing country to help with shortfalls in another. Are these policies working well?*

Ingram: The triangular transactions are important: we spend over $100 million a year, probably more than any other organization. This in itself is a powerful incentive to South-South trade. We also buy within the countries we are helping and do food exchanges. For example, we exchange wheat for the local cereal which can then be used in our rural programmes. This way, you meet their import need and use the local commodity for school feeding programmes, maternal health programmes, structural adjustment programmes, etc.

Food aid for mitigating the negative effects of structural adjustment is also important. When a country is required to cut expenditures on primary schooling, for example, then we can help to compensate with a school feeding programme.

Food for work is self-targeting for the poor in ways that other programmes are not. You do not get people to work for food unless they are very poor. Poverty alleviation is very difficult to do and we are convinced that food aid, if used properly, is a very useful tool, if not an absolute solution.

DE *Maurice Strong, who helped lead the UN emergency operations in Africa from 1984-86, recently recommended the establishment of a World Food Bank, a proposal not well received in some quarters.*

WFP/Jeff Shaw

Anticipating serious famine conditions in Sudan, WFP has stockpiled 25,000 tonnes of cereals in drought-affected areas.

DE *All your work is aimed at increasing food security. Back in the early 70s there was a real scare about global food security when global stocks fell to dramatically low levels. Though good harvests are expected this year, global food security is still very fragile. How worried should we be?*

Ingram: I am worried. Ironically, if the current GATT negotiations in agriculture succeed in liberalizing trade, there could be serious repercussions. Some of the developed countries' production and export subsidies have had a distorting effect on the trade of agricultural commodities among developing countries. For countries heavily dependent on food imports, trade liberalization would mean increased cost and significantly increased problems of food security. A global food market economy would be vulnerable to dramatic shifts in production due to changes in weather.

One can easily envisage a situation where fluctuations in global food production caused by nature could seriously reduce stocks again. We could repeat the experience of the early 70s.

Technological aspects are also worrying. The higher yields produced by the Green Revolution are difficult to sustain over time. There are many countries, especially in Africa, where food production is falling behind. We still face the threat of major famine in many regions of the developing world.

DE *Africa is proof that famines are still with us. Are you expecting more trouble in Africa?*

Ingram: There is a famine looming in Sudan right now but I think we can deal with the African situation because the affected populations are relatively small. There the problem is one of reaching people in the midst of civil strife. But if China or India had a couple of consecutive years of bad harvests, we'd have trouble dealing with that, especially if there were a serious cutback in production in industrialized countries.

Ingram: Yes, he has made some interesting proposals. But, I think he underestimated the extent to which an instrument on which to build this modality already exists in WFP. There is already an International Emergency Food Reserve (IEFR) managed by WFP, whose current level is 500,000 tonnes of cereal. It is really a series of pledges by governments to deal with food emergencies and in itself is not enough to deal with a global food emergency. I feel that some enlargement of WFP's functions and of the IEFR would take care of most of what he wants.

DE *WFP has been one of the UN organizations that has re-established the UN's new effectiveness in the face of world crises. How do you see the current level of multilateral cooperation?*

Ingram: The revitalization of the political role of the UN as a result of the end of the Cold War is remarkable and, in my view, always to have been expected. Our failures were the failures of the major powers. However, I would say that on the operational front we still have a long way to go.

Nevertheless, the UN system has improved the way it has handled emergencies. The coordination of the main players, including the WFP, within the UN system has also improved a lot. It is extremely important that the UN do even better. I am pleased by the greater role taken by the secretary-general in the larger, complex food emergencies. This is tied into the way that the UN is perceived, a widespread sense that the UN has to deliver.

DE *How would you change things at WFP to increase its effectiveness along these lines?*

Ingram: As we speak, we are proposing some amendments to the general regulations of WFP. One of them is to enable WFP, acting on the instructions of the secretary-general, to deal with urgent humanitarian situations where it is not really feasible to have a government request for aid. We are now helping inside Liberia, for example, where there is no functioning government. We should not be constrained by factors within the system of a bureaucratic nature which reduce our capability for efficient action.

The UN is on trial in this area. We are committed to doing our best, along with sister agencies such as UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and IFAD, to ensure that the UN's reputation is as good in the social and economic sectors as it has become in the political sector. Our recent work together has been very promising.

DE *What about the obstacles placed before economic and social development by the member states themselves? There are situations where the injustices and inequalities in some societies are such that no amount of aid is going to bring about fundamental change. How is the UN to respond to these limitations?*

Ingram: There is always going to be tension between dealing with governments, as we must, and the pursuit of the goal of development. We have a lot of constraints and problems caused by the policies of major donors as well. It's a delicate issue for UN agencies. The whole problem of poverty is wrapped up in the issue of social justice in societies and the UN cannot be effective in dealing with poverty unless the economic and social structure of the country is reasonably equitable.

So we have to work through the traditional devices of persuasion. We must be more positive towards the countries that are clearly concerned with social justice and, in countries that are not, we sometimes face the dilemma as to how we can help. Then we focus on the poor with the aim to mitigate the situation while working for improvement in the longer term. It has to be addressed with tact, with persistence, but we must always be careful that in trying to do good we also do not make matters worse. □

ecowatch

Middle East water problems a security risk

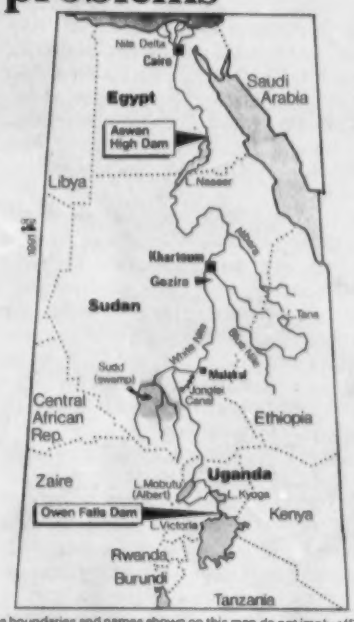
In addition to the constant spectre of military conflict, the Middle East is facing a number of major environmental crises that, by threatening the fragile ecosystems of the area, undermine relations between countries as well.

by Heba Saleh

"There's no easy solution", says Mostafa Tolba, executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), referring to the water problems that are most frequently at the heart of the ecological problems facing the Middle East. "What we're seeing and saying is that there's a potential for conflict where there are shared water resources which are limited. We have 214 rivers in the world shared by two or more states; all these with increasing need for water, adding to the problems of pollution." Tolba has been pressing for the expansion of the concept of national security to encompass environmental security, as part of a long-term solution to these problems.

The future of the Nile river is a prime example of a situation where an environmental problem is creating diplomatic tensions.

The Nile, the longest river in the world, winds through nine African states: Egypt, Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Zaire, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi. Hydrologists, meteorologists, diplomats and international lawyers from all countries agree that many more people will be using the river in the future and that there is likely to be less water in parts of the system. The population of the Nile basin states, now estimated at 246 million, is expected to soar to 812 million by the year 2040.



The boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

The problems are exacerbated by the use of traditional irrigation schemes which cause the loss of large amounts of water, waterlogging and salinization of arable land. "We did not build the infrastructure for modern agricultural techniques like sprinkling and drip irrigation", observes UNEP's Tolba. "Now it's extremely difficult because of the cost of energy and setting up the infrastructure itself."

A report in Egypt's daily *Al Ahram* newspaper recently asked in a banner headline: "Who will stop the Nile water's haemorrhage?" In a detailed study, the paper asked if Egypt would initiate a serious programme to increase water resources before they diminish further owing to overworking, misuse and diversion. The Egyptian government recently estimated that by the year 2000 it will need at least 16 per cent more water than it is currently getting.

But will this water be available? Global warming, says Michael Hulme of the Climatic Research Unit at the University of East Anglia, is expected to produce temperature rises of one degree in the Nile basin by the year 2030, which could change rainfall patterns on the Blue Nile sources in Ethiopia from which the Nile in Egypt receives 80 per cent of its water. Higher temperatures may also cause more water to be lost through evaporation, especially in the Aswan High Dam Lake.

Proposals have been made to shift water from that reservoir to Lake Tana in the cooler Ethiopian highlands. Water saved would benefit Egypt, Sudan and drought-prone Ethiopia and energy produced would be shared between the three states. As simple as it sounds, such an arrangement would require a political agreement between the three states, an event rarer than rainfall in the region.

The situation has been exacerbated, Egyptians say, by Ethiopia's recent discussions with the Israelis over proposed dam projects for the Blue Nile. The nightmarish prospects of a drop in Egypt's water supply has prompted the government to dispatch the minister of state for foreign affairs to Addis Ababa to seek reassurances from the Ethiopians.

The Nile is not the only river which is a potential source of conflict. The Jordan river—another over-utilized water resource—runs through Jordan, Israel and Syria. The latter two are reportedly pumping more than their fair share, leaving Jordan increasingly high and dry.

GEMINI □

China steps up water resource management

New York (UNDTCD)—One of the major problems facing China today is the shortage of water. Approximately 20 per cent, or 300, of the cities in China currently face severe water shortages.

To meet their needs, China needs to deliver 10 million tonnes of additional water each day.

It is widely recognized that the sustainable economic development of China will become more difficult unless water management problems are given greater attention.

In north China, which has had a drought since 1980, the only heavy rainfall in recent years was in the form of a typhoon in 1985. In this heavily populated region, the combination of less water, increasing demands by industrial and urban users, and industrial pollution have made the problem of water shortage particularly acute.

In response to this situation the government has been making efforts to establish a "water saving economy". In the agricultural sector, particular stress has been on increased efficiency of water utilization through low-volume irrigation techniques and cropping practices. In industry, the focus is on recycling, reusing reclaimed water and using seawater in coastal cities.

Complementing this, the State Science and Technology Commission (SSTC) is carrying out a three-stage policy study of water management in the Beijing-Tianjing area.

The first stage established a basic policy framework. The second consists of a number of subprojects, including water-saving agriculture and the treatment of chemical industry waste water in Beijing.

The UN Department of Technical Cooperation for Development (UNDTCD), through its Water Resources Branch, has been called on to provide technical cooperation for the third stage, under a $3.4 million project funded by UNDP.

In a break with the traditional reliance on water resources master plans, the project is pooling some 18 different types of expertise to create a macro-economic water planning model. This will take into account the physical quantity of water in north China, and socio-political, environmental as well as economic objectives.

The model will provide guidelines and priorities for the allocation and reallocation of water between different users. The project will also develop hydrological water quality and management models and provide studies of specific problems connected with agricultural water saving, ground water pollution and waste water treatment.

Training workshops and seminars are to be held to disseminate the results among the technical staff of all the provincial centres and to inform policy makers and managers of the potential of the models. □

Egypt

Water beneath its sea of sand?

Cairo—Remote-sensing satellite images have led to a spectacular discovery of water beneath Egypt's Western Desert. There is speculation that it may contain more ground water than was thought to exist for the whole of Africa.

A test drilling, says Farouk Al-Baz, Egyptian director of Boston University's Centre for Remote Sensing, indicated that there is enough water "for agriculture for 200,000 acres (80,000 hectares) for 200 years from that one well".

by Deboral Pugh

The discovery is of enormous significance for a predominantly desert country dependent on the Nile, 80 per cent of whose waters come from drought-prone Ethiopia.

Instruments aboard the US Space Shuttle Columbia first revealed the rocky beds of ancient river courses beneath the desert sand.

"There must have been a great deal of water to form valleys as wide as the Nile Valley, 20 kilometres (12 miles) across", al-Baz speculated after examining the images.

"If there were rivers as large as the Nile, then there was much rain and a great deal of surface water. Some of that water would have evaporated; some would have seeped through the deeply fractured rock beneath and stored in aquifers."

To pursue his theory that the water in those aquifers is still there, al-Baz, in cooperation with the Egyptian government, started test drilling near the confluence of several buried valleys in the Western Desert.

He believes the find indicates the desert's vast potential as a source of water. He cautions, however, that this particular reserve is fossil water, and that because its ability to recharge itself is unknown it should be treated as a non-renewable resource and used sparingly.

Other scientists are also convinced there is much water to be found beneath Egypt's sea of sand.

Kamal Hefny, director of the Institute of Ground Water Research, has just produced a map, based on satellite images, which reveals eight distinct aquifers.

Egypt uses three billion cubic metres of ground water a year. Hefny estimates the figure will increase to eight billion cubic metres, and much more when all regions are fully explored.

The belief that the waters of the Nile were a limitless resource was undermined after the decade of drought, which devastated Sudan and Ethiopia, began to affect water levels behind Egypt's giant Aswan Dam.

With civil wars also raging in the two Nile-basin partners, Egypt became acutely aware of its vulnerability to events at the distant sources of the river *(see related story above)*.

In the urgent search for alternative supplies, major ground water discoveries were made in Egypt before the advent of satellite imaging.

But the new technology can show with more precision where to look for water and cut the cost of exploration by up to 90 per cent, says al-Baz. Drilling for water is cheaper and faster than building a dam or piping river water long distances.

Though the desert is a hostile environment to conventional scientific and geological analysis, the region's lack of vegetation and cloud cover makes it ideal for effective remote sensing.

The use of ground water from the Western Desert has a long lineage: evidence points to the existence of an ancient irrigation system fed by deep wells. Egyptian and Dutch experts believe that nearly one million acres (400,000 hectares) of land were once made fertile thanks to water from the wells.

About 2,500 years later, scientists hope to repeat the ancient feat and find renewable sources of ground water to nourish sustainable development in the desert. PANOS □

Deborah Pugh, a British journalist living in Cairo, writes on development issues.

Privatization in Africa

From page 1

countries became independent—mostly in the early 1960s—many leaders favoured an inward-looking, socialist course which encouraged state intervention. For example, Ghana's first leader, the outspoken Kwame Nkrumah, not only nationalized private-sector companies but also created more state firms. Since Ghana's independence in 1957, the state has acquired a majority shareholding in 180 enterprises, and a minority shareholding in another 54, covering approximately half of the modern sector.

But state intervention has not been confined to left-leaning governments. When Malawi became independent in 1964, president Hastings Kamuzu Banda announced a development policy based on the "acquisitive instincts of the people". But a lack of local entrepreneurial expertise, coupled with fears of total domination by foreign companies, led to the creation of several state-owned enterprises in this tiny southern African state.

The most important of these state firms are the Malawi Development Corporation, which was set up to foster industrial projects; the Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC), which is supposed to market crops but has become involved in farming and food processing as well; and the Press Corporation, which is owned by a trust established by Banda to promote local entrepreneurs. Economists estimate that prior to divestiture, these three companies accounted for one third of the country's GDP.

Togo also consistently followed a free-enterprise course, but, in addition, developed a string of government-run companies. Strategic industries like phosphate mining, the country's largest foreign exchange earner, were nationalized from French companies on the grounds that they could not be left in the hands of foreigners who had no regard for national priorities.

Like many other African governments, Togo devoted much of its energy in the early 1970s to modernizing its agriculturally-based economy as quickly as possible. When the price of phosphates quadrupled in 1974, several new parastatals were created, on grounds that local entrepreneurs lacked the capital—and foreign investors, the incentive—to carry the country into the modern era. At its peak, Togo had 73 parastatals.

Yet almost without exception, African parastatals, like those elsewhere, have performed poorly. Political considerations were frequently a problem. Thus, for example, Ghana's State Fishing Corporation (SFC) was forced to sell fish at the same price everywhere in the country, regardless of transport costs.

Poor management exacerbated the problems faced by state firms. For example, Malawi's Press Corporation and its Malawi Development Corporation (MDC) both suffered from overcentralized management, and MDC got into financial trouble when it borrowed a great deal of short-term capital to finance long-term development projects.

The Société Togolaise de Sidérurgie (STS), a former state-owned steel company now run by a US businessman, made great efforts to maximize its turnover figures in order to impress the finance minister but neglected to attempt to collect its debts.

The folly of that strategy has now been recognized by governments across the political spectrum, as policy makers grapple with huge budget deficits. In many countries, more than half of these deficits represent subsidies to parastatal firms. Selling off to private entrepreneurs is increasingly seen as a logical answer. As Ghana's State Enterprise Commission secretary Willi Adda observes: "No private businessman would go on operating an enterprise at a loss for as long as 15 years."

Reform or sell-off?

Yet, as the World Bank points out, African governments invariably confront such problems by first choosing to reform rather than to sell off their enterprises.

But in the case of the MDC and ADMARC, consultants recommended that the companies sell off about a third each of their total holdings. In general, according to one World Bank official, "progress in reforming public enterprises, while keeping them in the portfolio of the state, has been modest and slow."

On the other hand, agreeing on which firms to keep and which to sell also presents problems. For example, despite Malawi's clear commitment to privatization, disagreement has arisen between the government and consultants over the proposed sale of one of ADMARC's sugar-processing companies, which the state wants to retain because it is an important foreign-currency earner.

Although Togo is committed eventually to sell off all but 26 parastatals, mostly in areas like posts and telecommunications where it feels there are few takers, the state is hanging on to the country's phosphate mines because of their strategic importance.

Varying perceptions of the companies' worth have led to inevitable disagreements between the Ghanaian government and potential buyers over price. "We hear that the books [of the enterprises for sale] have not been re-evaluated and that the machines have run down", noted an Accra businessman. "You really wonder what you would be buying at the end of the day."

Another factor said to be holding up ratification is the concern in Ghana—shared by many countries undergoing privatization—that the process will lead to a new wave of foreign domination. Despite 33 years of independence, Ghana, like most African countries, still has very few local entrepreneurs and no capital market. As elsewhere, structural adjustment has led to a credit squeeze that further limits the ability of Ghanaians to buy some of what a senior official calls "the family silverware".

In Malawi, similar fears of foreign domination led the US Agency for International Development (USAID)—which has matched every three Malawi kwacha divested from ADMARC with a dollar in balance-of-payment support—to set up a soft-loan facility so that Malawians will be able to buy at least some of the farms being sold by ADMARC.

Fear of foreign control

Deals with foreign firms have not always worked out well. For example, Togo spent much time and energy negotiating the sale of its two textile mills to a joint US-Korean company called Pan Atlantic, only to see the deal fall through when the company lost a lot of money in the October 1987 stock market crash. Togo has now reached an agreement to sell the mills to Cha Chi Ming, a Hong Kong company, for one fifth their book value of $50 million.

All told, out of the original 73 companies, Togo has liquidated 10, privatized 14, and is in the process of privatizing another 5 companies. An additional 18 remain to be tackled. The parastatal sector is already a net profit earner and has attracted $32 million in new foreign investment. □

Colleen Lowe Morna is a freelance journalist based in Harare.

Indian prostitutes and AIDS dilemmas

From page 1

neglected by authorities. Heterosexual contact is now believed to be the major mode of HIV spread in the country. However, this finding has been conveniently misconstrued so as to place all responsibility on women, prostitutes in particular.

Studies throughout the country identify the highest percentage of infected people as prostitutes followed by professional blood donors and those being treated for sexually transmitted diseases (STD) at government hospitals. The exception is the north-eastern state of Manipur where a high percentage of intravenous drug users have been found seropositive. Based on limited test results, the World Health Organization has estimated that India will have at least 60,000 full-blown cases of AIDS by 1995.

What is not generally known is that the surveys are invariably restricted to these three groups. Even here, prostitutes continue to make up the largest number of those tested, thanks to their easy accessibility and vulnerability under law.

Once arrested, the woman can be sentenced to between six months and three years of detention. In some cases, HIV positive women have continued to be detained, some in remand homes in Madras, long after the expiry of their sentence periods. They had no access to lawyers and continued to be held though their families had agreed to take care of them.

In a test case spearheaded by a public interest group, litigation seeking the release of five such women was filed last March. In July the Madras High Court ordered the release of the women noting that "all the women said they did not know why they had been detained, that they wished to go home and that in spite of having been inmates of the home for five years, they were ignorant of the nature of their illness and were under the impression that they were now cured".

This ruling prompted the release of close to 500 HIV positive women and others who had been "rescued" from brothels in Bombay. They had been transferred across the country to remand homes in Madras aboard a special train nicknamed "Mukhti"—Sanskrit for salvation— ostensibly as a first step towards sending them home. The story made headlines around the country when close to 75 per cent of the 854 women rescued tested positive for HIV.

The women, some as young as 15 and carrying babies, were met by a battery of TV crews and press reporters as well as by curious onlookers.

One of the prostitutes, Eswari, 24, said that she was orphaned when young and forced to leave home after being raped by her uncle. She had worked as a prostitute for six years before becoming a cook and cleaner in a brothel. Though bewildered, she was optimistic about the unexpected turn of events: "I hope to return home and I pray this homecoming will be different", she sobbed as she was led to the waiting bus.

The Madras court's ruling highlights the potential conflict between human rights and public health in dealing with AIDS.

Doctors at the local hospital have avoided all contact with the HIV positive women, even refusing to take outpatient slips directly from them. The women are told to leave the forms on the counter.

Many of the 150 women held at the Vigilance Home in Madras expressed their anger about their detention and confusion regarding what testing positive for HIV means. Volunteer social workers there know little about HIV and have no previous experience of working with prostitutes.

The state minister for social welfare has said women whose families agree to take them back would be allowed to leave detention once they are educated about the nature of their infection. But few families have responded.

Said one Bombay prostitute: "After publicly announcing that we have been held at the Vigilance Home—where everybody knows that only prostitutes are held—which family will want to risk the dishonour of taking us back?"

"Long-term detention, even in sheltered workshops, is unrealistic", argues the Social Welfare Board chairman. "And as the numbers of HIV positive people swell, it seems inescapable that public education, not discrimination, is the answer."

Still, the authorities decided to hold them until some kind of rehabilitation was arranged. To enable such detention, the government proposed to arm itself with enough legal powers. The High Court ruling forced its hand and "those women whose families agreed to take them back were sent home". Though this is the official story it is widely believed that most of the women have returned to prostitution.

The court decision which led to the release of five of the long-term prisoners argued that their detention was discriminatory since there were at least as many men who were infected and who were free to spread the infection. The court also pointed out that blood banks in Madras rarely screened blood, and that many illegal blood banks did not even pretend to do testing.

This is particularly problematical because there is an acute shortage of blood supplies in many Indian cities. Blood banks get most of their supplies from professional donors, most of whom have not been tested for infection.

Against a background of almost total ignorance about HIV and AIDS and the methods of preventing spread, the traditional prejudices against sex and STDs and the complete absence of a comprehensive, consistent public education campaign, the risks are multiplied a hundredfold.

No effort has been made to educate the women about precautions that might have protected them from HIV. In virtually every case they had been infected by HIV positive clients who had refused to use condoms, routine behaviour among men who visit prostitutes in this country.

The women do not have any means of demanding condom use either. In brothels, the transactions are always negotiated between the client and the pimp or brothel owner, so the woman herself is little more than a commodity. "If we say anything the madam will beat us up." □

Shyamala Nataraj is an Indian journalist living in Madras.

women in development

Philippines

Goodbye to mail-order brides

by Lorna Kalaw-Tirol

Manila—Women's groups and religious organizations scored a major victory in June when president Corazon Aquino signed into law a bill declaring the mail-order bride business illegal.

The new law penalizes anyone who establishes a mail-order bride business, including marriage brokerages, pen-pal clubs, introduction bureaus or escort services. Also outlawed is the solicitation of Filipino women to join any club or association whose objective is to match women for marriage to foreigners.

The law also declares illegal advertisements, publications or any printed material promoting the activity or the solicitation of Filipino women for such organizations.

The penalty for violators is imprisonment of six to eight years and a minimum fine of P20,000 ($900).

Foreigners caught engaging in the mail-order bride business will be summarily deported and forever barred from returning to the Philippines after paying the fine and serving time in prison.

After signing the bill, president Aquino noted that the victims "are young women from our remote 'barangays' [villages] whom they lure through sweet talk and grandiose promises".

She said the perpetrators of the crime "use all means, fair and foul, even our postal system, to further their sole motive of crass economic gain".

At the same time, she reprimanded the media, "those most powerful disseminators of information and ideas", for allowing themselves to be used.

Senator Ernesto Maceda, author of the bill, said he was moved to act by "the alarming rate of battered Filipino wives" produced by the mail-order bride business.

The business of finding Filipino wives for foreign men has grown so fast in the last decade that it now covers not only Europe and the United States, but also Australia and Japan.

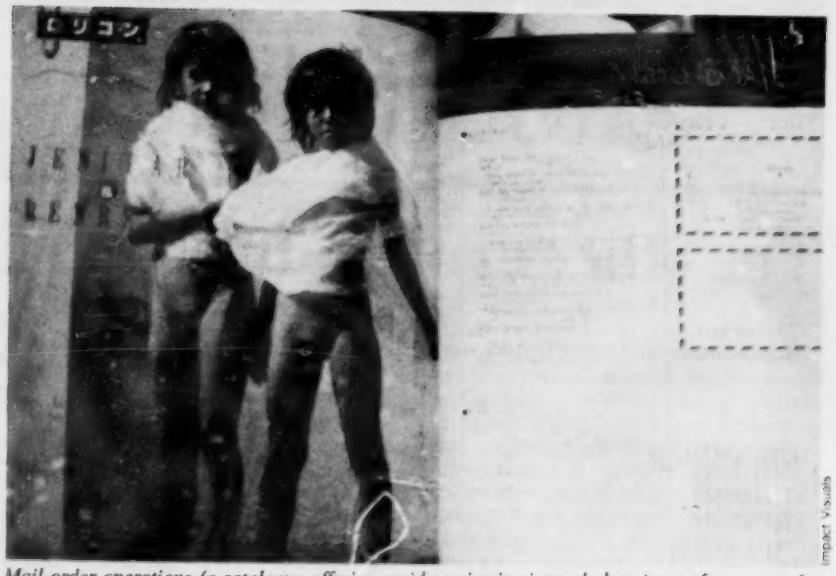
In Germany there are more than 200 marriage agencies dealing in Asian women. The average payment for a Filipino bride ordered by mail is 10,000 DM. One agency, which has 1,300 Filipino women on its roster, guarantees customer satisfaction: the chosen one can be exchanged after three months if the man is not happy with her.

Advertised as "sweet, docile, servile and not yet emancipated", Filipino women appeal to Europeans who find their own countrywomen hard, assertive and too emancipated.

One Australian bureau charges $139 per client for video presentations of eligible Filipino girls and $1,382 for a guided tour of the Philippines during which bride-seekers are familiarized with local customs.

In Australia, one of the most popular destinations for mail-order brides, a singles bulletin keeps a file of 25,000 Filipino women who have expressed a wish to have friendly relations with or to marry Australian men.

As in Australia, marriage bureaus in California maintain conduits in Manila. A California bureau charges clients a membership fee of $20 for which they receive a catalogue of photos, addresses and other details about 30 Filipino women.



Impact Visuals

Mail-order operations (a catalogue offering maid service is pictured above) are often covers for the white slave trade.

In the last few years, Japanese farmers have been visiting the Philippines to search for wives because the women in their hometowns prefer to find themselves husbands in the cities. The farmers are thus forced to look in neighbouring countries for women who will keep house for them and help out on their farms.

Today, Filipino women comprise the largest number of foreign wives in Japan. Not all of their marriages were arranged, however. Most of these women had previously been entertainers in Japan.

In northern Philippines the mayor of one town is said to have helped the Japanese farmers' cause by entering into a sister-municipality agreement with his counterpart in Higashi, an agricultural community in Japan. The agreement specified that the men of Higashi desired "to get acquainted with and be married to the wonderful ladies of Santiago, Isabela".

Such an arrangement is done through a marriage broker who charges his middle-aged rural clients several hundred thousand yen.

Whether the new Philippine law can curb what has become a lucrative international business remains to be seen. □

Women's Feature Service

Books on women and AIDS

AIDS and Women: A Sourcebook, *by Sarah Barbara Watstein and Robert Anthony Laurich, is the first reference work to deal solely with the impact of AIDS as it pertains to women. It combines practical advice, statistical documentation and recommended readings, and describes more than 600 AIDS-related sources from articles, government publications, books and non-print information sources. Fourteen annotated chapters discuss AIDS transmission, prevention methods and the disease's effects on women with AIDS and women as AIDS caregivers. A glossary explains AIDS terminology, conditions and human behaviours related to AIDS transmmission. Appendices list audiovisual resources and organizations serving women. Forty pages of statistical tables chart available data on AIDS.*

AIDS and Women: A Sourcebook *is 160 pages long and is available, for $36.50, from The Oryx Press, 4041 N. Central Ave., Phoenix, AZ 850123397, USA. Tel. (1-800) 279-ORYX; Fax (1-800) 279-4663.*

Triple Jeopardy: Women and AIDS *says that in some cities in the Americas, Africa and Europe, AIDS is now the biggest single killer of women aged 20-40. This global study posits that HIV and AIDS threaten a woman in three ways: she may become infected with HIV herself, and may then develop AIDS; if she is HIV-positive, she may pass this infection to her baby in the womb; because a woman is the main caregiver for the sick, she will carry the burden if someone close to her develops AIDS. The book provides authoritative facts and figures. It explores the implications of the HIV epidemic for the woman, her child and her family. Women in dozens of countries describe how AIDS is disrupting families and communities, and the steps they are taking to protect themselves and those close to them.*

Triple Jeopardy: Women and AIDS *is available from Panos Books, 9 White Lion Street, London N1 9PD, UK. £6.95. Trade distribution by Central Books, 99 Wallis Road, London E9 5LN, UK.*

Women and AIDS: Dark prospects

Worldwide, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 10 million people are now infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and that a little over one third—three million—are women. It is expected that 500,000 people will develop AIDS during the years 1990-1991, including about 200,000 women. By the end of 1992, a cumulative total of over 600,000 cases of AIDS will have occurred among women. By the year 2000 the annual number of AIDS cases in women will begin to equal that in men.

These numbers come from a recent report co-authored by Angèle Petros-Barvazian, director of WHO's Division of Family Health, and Michael H. Merson, director of WHO's Global Programme on AIDS. [WHO has chosen the theme "Women and AIDS" for World AIDS Day, 1 December, to highlight the increasing impact of AIDS on women.]

High rates of HIV infection in pregnant women, such as are encountered in sub-Saharan Africa and in some countries in the Caribbean, with implications for perinatal infection and elevated infant mortality, could have a devastating impact on the fabric of society. Indeed, the authors say, it is estimated that during the 1990s, AIDS will kill 1.5 to three million women of reproductive age in Central and East Africa.

The pandemic's increasing global impact on children will be compounded by the increase in early deaths among HIV-infected mothers with uninfected offspring. Many of these uninfected children will become orphans as their parents succumb to AIDS. Thus, in addition to the grim prospect of millions of paediatric AIDS cases expected during the 1990s, more than 10 million uninfected children under 10 years—mostly in sub-Saharan Africa—will be orphaned as their parents die of AIDS.

However, the report continues, the impact of AIDS on women is not just a matter of numbers. AIDS affects women not only as individuals who are HIV-infected but also in their multiple roles in society and the family—as health care providers, educators, wives, mothers and income providers.

The authors say that the status of women within the family and society makes them particularly susceptible to HIV infection, a "social vulnerability" related to generally low status. The subordinate role of women in society might vary in degree in different countries, but its impact is similar everywhere. This includes lack of equal access or opportunity for education, information and services in health, income, social rights, etc. These undoubtedly affect their access, for example, to information on how to protect themselves from HIV infection, the authors believe. The stigma attached to AIDS can subject women to further discrimination, social rejection and other violations of their rights.

healthline

The other drug traffickers

The developing world is becoming a dumping ground for dangerous and ineffective medicines spurned by the European markets that produce them, according to an analysis of German and Swiss drug exports.

The report, *German and Swiss Drug Supplies to the Third World*,* by Robert Hartog and Hermann Schulte-Sasse for the NGOs BUKO Pharma-Kampagne, the Declaration of Berne and Health Action International (HAI), says some multinational drug companies are flooding the markets of poorer

by Sophie Davies

countries with unessential and unsafe products.

Germany and Switzerland are Europe's biggest drug exporters, yet they have weak pharmaceutical quality controls. Roughly half the drugs they market in the Third World are ineffective, providing little real health benefit (60 per cent of German exports, 48 per cent of Swiss), while some carry unacceptable risks.

One third of the drugs they sell to developing countries are not sold in the home markets, either because they are obsolete, deregistered in Europe, or because stiff domestic competition forces them to look for greener pastures elsewhere.

According to Amsterdam-based HAI, which is a worldwide network of around 100 consumer protection groups that lobbies for the safe, rational and economic use of pharmaceuticals, neither Germany nor Switzerland gears its sales to suit basic health-care needs in the target countries: a meagre 12 per cent of German, and only 17 per cent of Swiss, drug exports fit the World Health Organization's (WHO) Model List of Essential Drugs (fifth list, 1988). This list identifies a "common core" of drugs that are the most needed for the health care of the majority of the population and which should be available at all times in adequate amounts and in the proper dosage forms.

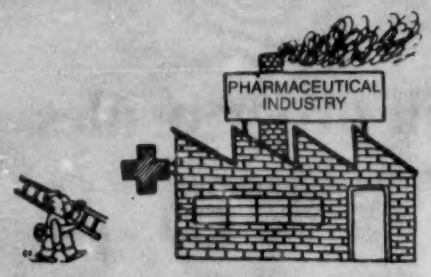
Alfred Fritschi, of the Swiss NGO Declaration of Berne, said the report highlights Germany and Switzerland because, alongside the United States, they are the largest exporters.

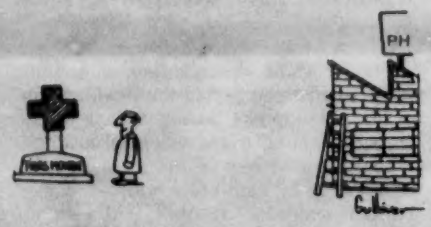
It is also a response to growing public criticism, including pressure on company management from shareholders in the two countries since the early 1980s, of lax drug export controls and the inflated product range sold in the developing world.

Moves by the European Community (EC) to enact export-control laws failed last year, so now several national parliaments are trying to clamp down on the industry on their own. In direct response to the report, says Fritschi, Switzerland will push reforms through parliament on the back of demands for import controls. The Dutch are considering similar measures. Germany recently placed tighter controls on drug exports, outlawing the export of unlicensed, high-risk products.

The report examined and classified 1,273 German and 1,084 Swiss drugs marketed in 26 Third World nations. HAI exhorts authorities in the developing world to tighten restrictions on many of these drug imports. Twenty-two per cent of medicines imported by Pakistan and the Philippines from Swiss firms are essential drugs due to their governments' tough registration policies; the essential drugs comprise only 14 per cent of drug imports to French-speaking Africa.

Until recently the lack of Third World drug supplies stirred international concern.





Santé à vendre/Peuples Solidaires

Now, the vast range of drugs that Germany offloads on developing countries is detrimental to the health care of recipients.

The bewildering choice of high-cost medicines, often having little therapeutic value and poorly tested and labelled, reflects the lack of controls on Germany's bloated home market, which has 35,000 drug products on sale. Norway provides equally good health care with just 2,000 products. Sweden does so with only 2,500.

Germany has 35,000 drug products on sale. Norway provides equally good health care with just 2,000 products.

Corporate response to the HAI report has been mixed, says Fritschi. Companies such as Ciba-Geigy and its subsidiary Servipharm have a good philosophy on consumer ethics and are receptive to criticism. Others are angry at the findings.

As Andrew Herxheimer of the University of London says: "Many shareholders in these companies would be astonished to see what rubbish is being exported in their names." GEMINI □

Sophie Davies, a British journalist, has lived in Iran, Turkey and Indonesia. She is currently working for Gemini News Service.

* *The German study,* Das Bundesdeusche Arzneimittelangebot in der Dritten Welt, *by Robert Hartog and Hermann Schulte-Sasse, is available from BUKO Pharma-Kampagne, August Bebel Str 62, 4800 Bielefeld, Germany (price DM 14). The Swiss study* Das Schweizer Arzneimittelangebot in der Dritten Welt, *by Robert Hartog, can be ordered from Erklarung von Bern, Postfach 177, 8031 Zurich, Switzerland (price SwFr 15). The summary in English,* German and Swiss Drug Supplies to the Third World, *by Robert Hartog and Hermann Schulte-Sasse, can be ordered through direct bank transfer from: Zurcher Kantonalbank, Filiale Klusplatz, 8030 Zurich, Switzerland. Account 1137-0604.500. Quote study Hartog/Schulte. Erklarung von Berne. (SwFr 25).*

Viet Nam

Malaria epidemic out of control

Viet Nam is currently facing a malaria epidemic which threatens to disrupt the country's economic reform programme. The incidence of malaria in the countryside is already approaching crisis proportions, and experts say it will escalate in the next 12 months unless the government dramatically extends its anti-malaria campaign. To do that it needs foreign aid.

Do Duc Tuy, Director of the Malaria Institute in Hanoi, estimates that about 15 per cent of Viet Nam's 57 million people have malaria. In some badly affected areas, such as mountainous and border regions, the figure is believed to be near 25 per cent.

In the Ky Ang district of Nghe Tinh province, whole villages are infected. Agricultural productivity has declined drastically as a result.

Some foreign specialists are worried that malaria could spread to nearly half the population. A foreign doctor, Benjamin Higgins, warns that malaria in South-East Asia is on the rise and that Viet Nam will experience an explosion in the coming year. He says that the incidence of malaria is known to expand suddenly every four or five years and that it is Viet Nam's turn to experience this upsurge.

Mosquitoes pick up the malaria parasite from an infected person and transmit it to those who are free of the disease. To break the chain, Tuy says, mosquitoes must be wiped out and infected people must be cured.

But at present, he laments, "all we can do is try to contain the current epidemic". Viet Nam does not have the resources to invest in full-scale prevention and eradication programmes.

Ten years of fighting in Cambodia have brought Viet Nam to the brink of an

by Larry Jagan

epidemic. In 1979, Vietnamese troops entered neighbouring Cambodia, eventually numbering one million. In September last year, the Vietnamese withdrew their last troops from Cambodia and began to count the cost.

Bui Tinh, editor of the Communist Party newspaper *Nhan Zhan*, says that in those 10 years more than 120,000 Vietnamese soldiers were killed or incapacitated—half of them by malaria. General Tran Cong Man, former editor of the army paper, says 500,000 soldiers returned from Cambodia with malaria. This created a vast new reservoir of the disease, including the virulent cerebral variety.

Tuy admits the war was an important contributing factor in the current crisis, but prefers to play down its role: "The movement of people in and out of malaria areas, like the new economic zones, building roads and returning to their own villages with the malaria parasite, is certainly the root cause of the current spread of malaria in Viet Nam."

Poor economic conditions and inadequate health services have also contributed to the resurgence: "Malaria is even re-occurring in those areas which we regarded as completely free of it."

Tuy says the major problem is that the malaria parasites have become resistant to formerly effective chemicals such as DDT and to drugs previously used for treatment. The World Health Organization recently disclosed that parasites have developed resistance to the drug Mefloquine on the Thai-Cambodian border, a development it warned could endanger more lives than armed conflicts in the region.

The Malaria Institute is also involved in developing new methods of control, including the impregnation of mosquito nets with the pesticide Permethrine.

According to Tuy, "this is not harmful to people, but is an effective deterrent against mosquitoes up to 100 metres. Mosquitoes which touch the net are killed instantly". The nets have to be reimpregnated every three or four months.

Tuy says there is much work to be done before the method becomes widely used: "In some regions, especially in the 'minority areas', we have supplied the local people with impregnated mosquito nets but they have not used them."

In such areas where ethnic peoples do not traditionally use nets, they are encouraged to hang curtains treated with Permethrine. Pilot schemes suggest nets can reduce the number of new cases by 60-70 per cent within five to seven months.

In addition, the insecticide Icon, replacing DDT—which accumulates in the food chain—is used to kill the malarial parasite before it is transmitted. Icon sprayed onto the walls of buildings is effective for up to 10 months in killing mosquitoes that come into contact with it.

But control is an uphill battle. "We have no preventative drugs for malaria", says Tuy. "The state is doing its best to cope with the new growth of malaria, but we need international aid, and investment from the national government, for the next few years if we are to do anything." PANOS □

Larry Jagan, an Asia specialist with Radio Netherlands, was recently in Viet Nam. He is former editor of Inside Asia *magazine.*

international education dossier

Planning for environmental literacy

Development organizations around the world increasingly recognize that without an environmental component in their programme planning, sustainable development is at risk. Similarly, there is a growing understanding that in order for the environmental component in any given project to be effective, there must be an awareness of environmental issues as well as the active support and involvement of people at the grassroots.

This requires the building of "environmental literacy" which in turn means environmental education, and lots of it. As

by Roma Stibravy

the Brundtland report, *Our Common Future*, states in its promotion of sustainable development, "Education must be improved in relevance to local conditions."

As a relatively new issue on the development scene, efforts at fostering environmental education have so far been sporadic and uncoordinated. But there is a growing sophistication within the UN system and the NGO community on ways to create, sustain and promote environmental literacy in developing countries *(see boxes on NGOs, UNESCO-UNEP)*.

Since the Stockholm Conference on the Environment in 1972, there is agreement on the principles underlying environmental literacy: it builds on the understanding that the earth's resources are finite, that the ecological balance is delicate, and that not only do people have the power substantially to alter the environment, they are also utterly dependent for their survival on the natural world. It fosters a sense of common responsibility for the environment and makes people aware of how human activity affects all aspects of the natural, cultural, social and economic environment.

As far as environmental literacy in the developing regions is concerned, people living in poverty cannot be expected at the same time to be spontaneously concerned with eking out a daily living and with such abstract concepts as environmental management and sustainable development. To have them perceive these as important, rather than as irrelevant to their situations, will require a long-term educational effort.

To begin, planners, policy-makers and educators have focused on the tasks of deciding just who should be targeted and what are the most effective means to foster a new consciousness. Some point to farmers and pastoralists, some to urban dwellers. Others argue that, given limited resources, the logical audience to target are the younger people, especially those still in school.

What NGOs are doing

Because of their grassroots ties, NGOs are taking the lead in developing school curricula to promote environmental education. One particularly innovative programme is *Outreach*, a bi-monthly environmental facts magazine which can be adapted by schools and the media for all age levels.

Produced by several NGOs with some support from UNEP, its aim is to provide environmental education elements in curricula on an interdisciplinary basis, including social studies, reading, language, arts and mathematics.

Outreach grew out of the realization that information about environmental degradation was not reaching the people who most need it. James Connor, director of *Outreach*, believes that a successful programme must make decision-makers realize the importance of environmental education and get them involved in promoting it. And just as important, he says, is to reach children before they drop out of school, which happens to a high proportion of students in developing countries.

The *Outreach* programme produces environmental magazine supplements for elementary schools, encourages developing countries to start their own magazines as a supplement to elementary school curricula, and provides those publishers with bi-monthly environmental information and tips to help them obtain outside funding for the ventures.

Since its formation in 1985, *Outreach* has produced over 70 information packs of approximately 30 pages each, with copyright-free information from a variety of sources. Offices have been set up in Nairobi at UNEP headquarters and in London at the Television Trust for the Environment (TVE) to produce and distribute the packets.

Connor believes that education should not just impart information but change people's attitudes towards the environment as well. "What is important is finding out what are the key concerns of the individual persons of the community", Connor says. "It is only by carefully considering individual needs and hopes that a suitable message on the environment can be drawn up. The challenge is to build the kind of message which the individual persons will see as making sense in their own terms, i.e. helping them to a better life by providing more food, time, money and comfort."

For further information, write to Outreach Central Office, c/o UNEP Information Service, P.O.Box 30552, Nairobi, Kenya; or Dr. James Connor, Outreach Director, Dept. of Science Education, 933 Shimkin Hall, New York University, 50 West 4th St., NY, NY 10003, USA.

The UNESCO-UNEP Global Programme

The event that spear-headed global concern for environmental education was the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, which recommended that the organizations of the UN system, especially UNESCO, establish an international programme in environmental education, interdisciplinary in approach, in-school and out-of-school, encompassing all levels of education and directed towards the general public.

In response, UNESCO and UNEP jointly created the International Environmental Education Programme (IEEP) in 1975. The IEEP, which remains the only major worldwide programme for environmental education, was developed with the understanding that the roots of environmental problems lie to a great extent in social, economic and cultural factors and cannot be solved by technological means alone.

The IEEP has produced, printed and disseminated an *International Strategy for Action in the Field of Environmental Education and Training for the 1990s*. Produced in 1987, this Global Strategy has since been widely disseminated in English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese and German, thereby providing member states and institutions with a framework and guidelines for the next decade and a basis for preparing their own national strategies for environmental education and environmental training for the 1990s.

The IEEP quarterly Newsletter *Connect*, which is produced in six languages, is one of UNEP's and UNESCO's widely disseminated publications. This vehicle of communication deals with a special feature in each issue.

The IEEP resource materials (numbering to date 30 teaching/learning modules of the EE series) continue to be adapted by national curriculum development centres and ministries of education to suit local needs and conditions. Thus far, the resource materials have been adapted for Togo, Kenya, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Mozambique, Chad and Algeria.

In addition, international, regional and national training courses, workshops and seminars in EE are being organized on a continuing basis for teachers, teacher trainers, administrators, professionals and other groups.

IEEP has also produced very effective full-colour environmental posters on most of the eight concentration areas targeted by UNEP, including climate change, fresh water, oceans and coastal areas, deforestation and desertification, biological diversity, environmental effects of industry and quality of life. Although the posters, geared to a variety of audiences, are now produced in English, there are plans to produce them in French, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese and Russian.

For further information, write to Chief, EE Section, UNESCO, 75007 Paris, France; or M. Atchia, Chief, EECTU Section, UNEP, P.O. Box 30552, Nairobi, Kenya.

The medium must be chosen as well. Due to the high rate of illiteracy in developing countries, many use radio programming to ensure that the environmental message is carried to as wide a constituency as possible. Where television is available, teachers can take advantage of the many TV and video programmes on the environment. NGOs, like the London-based Television Trust for the Environment (TVE), are very active in developing effective audio-visual products and provide videos free of charge.

But, at least in countries with good primary school systems, printed materials have been found to be the most cost-effective way to spread environmental literacy. These include illustrated workbooks with hands-on field programmes tailor-made to fit the needs of individual countries.

Effective environmental education programmes are integrated into all academic areas, and recreational (i.e. clubs, scouts) and field activities. For example, Save the Children, an international NGO, has established summer programmes for school children which rely heavily on school gardens, bee-keeping and conservation camps. Children can also join in grassroots community activities addressing local issues like deforestation, water pollution and desertification.

Educators stress that a method for evaluating the effectiveness of these programmes must also be established so as to ensure the continuing relevance of the teaching materials. Another way to ensure that environmental education in the schools remains in the curriculum is to include questions on the environment in national school examinations.

The UN Development Programme (UNDP) recently launched a $25-million, five-year Africa 2000 Programme, designed to form a network of Africa-based grassroots groups and NGOs in an innovative, continent-wide effort to combat environmental degradation. This unique opportunity to further environmental education was taken in the light of clear evidence that grassroots initiatives—not high-tech, high-budget projects—have had the greatest success in achieving sustainable development in Africa.

Efforts to stem environmental destruction in the South will ultimately succeed or fail depending on whether the people of developing countries see both the short- and long-term benefits of taking action to save the environment. Any solutions to the myriad environmental problems facing the earth must start with the active involvement and participation of communities which are both responsible for, and victims of, environmental degradation.

Environmental education can become an integral part of every nation's educational system. As we know, our ecosystem can be saved only by changing people's behaviour. Changing behaviour depends very much, as is being increasingly recognized, on all our environmental education efforts. □

Roma Stibravy is a consultant on environmental education issues for several UN agencies.

ngo forum

environment

NGOs and the UN: Rising to the environment challenge?

The UN is offering an unprecedented role to NGOs in preparations for the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), scheduled for June 1992 in Brazil. The question now facing both parties is whether they possess the flexibility and singleness of purpose to make the conference a watershed event.

Over 20,000 people are expected to attend UNCED and parallel meetings, making this the largest conference in

by Shazia Rafi

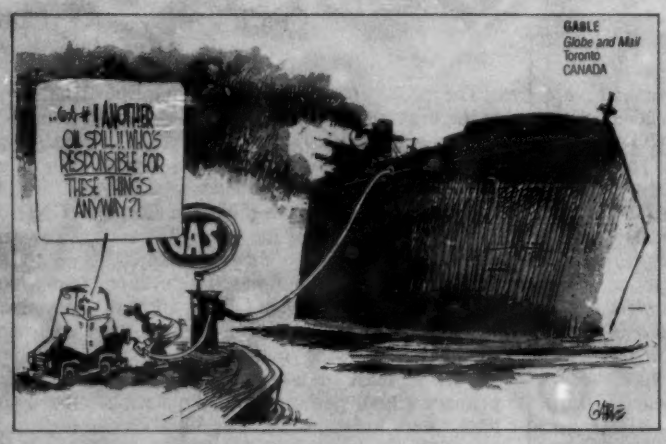
UN history. Maurice Strong, UNCED secretary-general, has termed NGO contribution to the conference "critical and indispensable", and has opened the process to all NGOs. UNCED is encouraging the NGOs to organize into an "entity" called the International Facilitating Committee (IFC) with representation from all independent sectors including industry. NGOs for their part are eagerly supporting UNCED to get an increased say on environment and development issues at the UN.

This expanded NGO role has stirred considerable opposition from some governments on the grounds that the conference is an intergovernmental meeting. UNCED has assured governments that it envisages no direct negotiating role for NGOs at the conference itself. NGOs can, however, give written and oral presentations to the preparatory committees. Since the substantive work on the UNCED agenda will be hammered out before the actual meeting, involvement in the preparatory process is critical for NGOs. Several key issues before the UNCED Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) meetings are still unresolved, the linkages between environment and development need to be clarified; North/South viewpoints must be balanced, both in attendance at the conference and development of the agenda; the mechanisms of NGO involvement must be delineated—which NGOs should be involved and how.

A long history of the NGO/UN working relationship precedes the current debate at UNCED. Some 900 NGOs have consultative status with ECOSOC, a status which allows them to attend meetings, present written and oral statements and execute UN projects. Through such participation, NGOs have influenced UN operations; the adoption of the WHO/UNICEF International Code on Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes, for example, can be directly traced to the efforts of the International Baby Foods Action Network (IBFAN), an NGO network.

Environment/development split

Although the UN has specialized agencies to deal with the environment (UNEP) and with development (UNDP), a separate secretariat was created for this conference to integrate environmental and developmental concerns. The emphasis of UNCED, as seen in the emerging agenda, remains the environment, due to the effective lobbying of environmental NGOs. Barbara Adams of NGLS, New York, notes, "UNCED's ability to get Southern governments' cooperation will depend on its focusing on developmental issues. Southern governments' support for NGO input will further depend on UNCED's arranging an equitable balance of environmental and development NGOs".



Linkages between environment and development are viewed differently by the North and South. But, Doug Hellinger of the Development GAP, feels that inclusion of Southern NGOs will help close this divide between the North's environmental emphasis and the South's development concerns. Recent exchanges with Southern NGOs at the Annual World Bank/IMF meetings, says Hellinger, showed that the issues of environment and development are much more integrated in their analysis. UNCED has sought to expand Southern participation by choosing Brazil as the conference's venue, permitting participation by non-consultative status NGOs and raising funds to enable Southern NGOs to attend the PrepComs.

International NGOs are however apprehensive about making "Southernness", i.e., the location of an NGO headquarters, one of the criteria for participation at UNCED. Beatrice von Roemer of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) points out that two-thirds of ICFTU's membership is from developing countries. Nigel Cantwell of Defense for Children International, however, feels that many NGOs do not accurately reflect the views of their Southern affiliates, the issue being "how far their representatives to the UN are in practice informed of the views of their organization's membership as a whole".

Relevancy criterion

UNCED has declared its willingness to invite all NGOs "relevant" to the debate on environment and development. Since only 15 per cent of all consultative NGOs do substantive work on environment and development, there is a need for outside expertise. Brazil (the host of the conference), has welcomed all NGOs recognizing that on the issue of the environment NGOs are "ahead of most governments".

Most NGOs feel that their permanent consultative status with the UN has been a hard-won concession from governments, and thus do not want to change the ground rules. They are open to limited inclusion of outside experts for specific meetings. Eileen Nic of the International Organization of Consumers Unions says, "We have lent our status to others in the past such as the Pesticide Action Network to attend FAO meetings and it has made us more effective."

Operational involvement

With shifting emphases on poverty alleviation, multilaterals are beginning to look to community-based NGOs to assist them in projects. NGO-implemented projects at the World Bank, for example, have increased from 15 annually to 50 annually in 1989. On the policy front, NGOs complain of having little say. Their expertise is used to "clean up the mess left by multilateral structural adjustment programmes, both in terms of environmental destruction and increased human poverty", says Doug Hellinger.

Preparations for UNCED

NGOs won a major concession when governments, at the Preparatory Commitee meeting (Nairobi, August) for the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, agreed to let all NGOs participate in and contribute to the preparatory process subject to approval by the General Assembly.

Although fewer than a dozen NGOs were able to attend the four-week-long meeting itself, greater numbers attended the parallel meeting organized by the Geneva-based Centre for Our Common Future (COCF). At that meeting, NGOs finalized plans for an International Facilitating Committee (IFC) to handle communications among NGOs and with UNCED regarding the national and international preparations for 1992.

IFC will have about 15 members nominated by international NGO coalitions representing, in addition to environment and development, varied sectors such as science, industry, human rights, women, youth, media, religions, trade unions and indigenous people. IFC members pledged to ensure equal membership of Southern NGOs and equal representation of women. IFC's secretariat will be based at COCF, but will transfer operations to Brazil shortly before the 1992 conference.

COCF and IFC are holding 12 to 15 public fora worldwide before 1992 to solicit NGO opinions and assist NGO input into their own national preparations. The first three were held in Nairobi, New Delhi and Bangkok.

The French government has also offered to host and fund a meeting of up to 1,200 delegates in Paris six months prior to the 1992 conference to enable NGOs to review preparatory progress.

What remains unresolved is whether NGO involvement in the Paris meeting will be handled by the newly formed IFC or the Environment Liaison Centre International (ELCI), a grouping of NGOs accredited to the UN Environment Programme.

NGOs are looking to UNCED to have more input on policy-making through contributions to the PrepComs and the national reports. Governments are being asked to include NGOs in the committees that will prepare the reports and to discuss the reports publicly.

Institutional stakes

The institutional organization of NGO input has also become a difficult issue. Former US Congresswoman Bella Abzug, who represents women on the IFC, feels it is necessary to involve all sections of society, not just "experts" in this debate.

However, UNEP and its existing NGO group, the Environment Liaison Centre International (ELCI) do not wish to be put into the same grouping as representatives of industry. Many others are unclear what the IFC's role will be. Tony Gross of the Centro Ecumenico de Documentaçao e Informaçao, Sao Paolo, expressed confusion over who outside Brazil is planning what. He accepted the "need for creating a global NGO network based on equality of participation. However, the conference must not become an end to itself; it is a point on a continuum, an opportunity for us to form alliances that will go beyond the conference".

Outlook post-1992

To be truly a success the conference must leave behind not only an agreed upon integrated agenda on environment and development for the next century, but the means to achieving it, i.e., an improved structure of communication and consultation on environment and development among NGOs, NGOs and the UN system and NGOs and governments.

Some of these linkages have already taken shape on specific issues or in a regional context. The Arusha conference on popular participation in February 1990 clearly demonstrated the NGOs' new stature in African development. It was not an intergovernmental conference but governments felt obliged to send their representatives as they had positions to represent and defend. Barbara Adams of NGLS, New York, says that in regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, the financial contribution of NGOs outweighs that of UN agencies.

Brazil 1992 is capable of becoming a similar show of strength. In the months ahead debate on the above issues is likely to intensify as, in the words of one UN official, "many institutional appetites are at stake". □

Shazia Rafi is a journalist and the representative to the UN of the All Pakistan Women's Association.

social

The Council for the Development of Economic and Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA) is a Pan-African NGO created in 1973 to mobilize the social science community in Africa to undertake fundamental and problem-oriented research which addresses the needs of African people. It also works to promote cooperation and collaboration among African universities, research and training institutes through national working groups. CODESRIA has diplomatic status with the government of Senegal and observer status at the OAU.

CODESRIA publishes the *CODESRIA Bulletin*, which contains clearly written analyses of current issues in African social science and is distributed free of charge to all African institutes and faculties to stimulate discussion, exchange information and encourage research cooperation among African researchers. It also publishes the quarterly bilingual journal *Africa Development*, which includes more in-depth discussion of the issues raised in the *Bulletin*.

For more information contact CODESRIA, P.O. Box 3304, Dakar, Senegal. Fax: 24-12-89.

NGOs hit World Bank, challenge each other

For the fifth consecutive year, NGOs from around the world convened to shadow the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) during their Annual Meetings. While they were not able to get specific commitments from the institutions on such controversial issues as structural adjustment, forced resettlement, environmental protection and popular participation, many of the participants felt that the meetings have energized the growing movement among NGOs to hold these institutions accountable to the principles they espouse.

During the week of 20 September, close to 200 participants from over 50 countries gathered for the Fifth Annual Forum on the World Bank and IMF in Washington, DC. The Forum provided an opportunity for NGOs to analyze the policies, programmes and projects promoted and supported by these institutions in the South:

This year's meeting was marked by a heightened sense of urgency on the part of the NGO community, which sharply criticized the Bank and the IMF, whom they implicated in the general economic and environmental decline in the South.

For example, the structural adjustment programmes pushed by both institutions were roundly criticized for their impacts on social services, wage levels, income distribution and local environments, as countries implementing them have found themselves forced to cut spending on social welfare, dampen domestic demand and increase export production to repay their foreign debt.

Participants noted that poverty increased significantly in the very regions—Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa—where the Bank and IMF most aggressively promoted their adjustment programmes. And in response to Bank claims that "the poor may benefit from these harsh adjustment measures in the long run", participants stated that when the very lives of the poor are at stake, it is difficult to speak of the long run.

NGO representatives were especially critical of recent Bank efforts to reflect NGO and environmental concerns in their lending policies. They pointed out that environmental problems, no matter how central to a project, still could not stop a loan. Some NGOs claimed that the creation in 1987 of an Environment Department within the Bank has done little to halt the overall environmental destruction that was a direct result of Bank lending. Participants also demanded that affected populations be consulted about proposed Bank projects, and called for a temporary halt on projects which included forced resettlement of local populations.

After the official Forum, NGOs participated in a number of meetings organized by both the World Bank and Washington NGOs.

According to Aubrey Williams, international relations officer from the World Bank, "the NGO presence was felt, noticed, and engendered discussion within the Bank. Some staff found it brought refreshing and constructive ideas, while others found it unhelpful and questioned the tactics" of the NGOs. "On the whole", he concluded, "it was positive because it brought an awareness of NGO viewpoints on various issues".

NGO tensions

This year's Forum was the largest ever in terms of Southern NGO participation. Maybe because of this, the meeting was much more defiant than previous ones. After meetings with Bank staff, as one of the Northern organizers put it, "they came up with a much more hard-hitting and cynical analysis of the Bank and IMF and stressed the need for a stronger NGO movement to challenge these institutions' development approach".

Southern delegates at the Forum met amongst themselves, rather than by individual regions as organizers had originally planned, to discuss ways to combat what they saw as the destructive policies of the Bank and IMF. In their words, "they were grateful for the opportunity to search for our own priorities and to build our own global perspective on the issues that would integrate race, class and gender concerns into an analysis of economic and ecological policies and programmes affecting our countries".

This South-South dialogue forced Northern NGOs to meet amongst themselves to determine where they should fit into a campaign on Bank and IMF policies that, most agreed, must be framed by Southern groups. Northern NGOs were encouraged by their Southern colleagues to deepen their work domestically by making the link between deepening poverty in the South and the economic problems faced by various communities in the North. Many participants left hopeful that the Forum marked a qualitative leap forward in relations between Northern and Southern NGOs.

R.H.

For information about next year's meeting in Thailand, contact Project for Ecological Recovery, 7713 Foi Nomchit, Nares Road, Bangrak, Bangkok 10500 Thailand. For copies of *BankCheck*, the NGO newspaper produced during the meetings, contact International Rivers Network, 301 Broadway, Suite B, San Francisco, Ca. 94133 USA.

radio

Community broadcasting

Known by its French acronym, AMARC, the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters is a network for exchange and solidarity among community broadcasters. Its work involves consulting, coordinating, facilitating cooperation and exchange among community broadcasters, and promoting community radio worldwide.

Created in 1988, AMARC's projects include research into African rural radio, in conjunction with the Centre for Inter-African Research (CIERRO) in Ouagadougou; developing and consolidating links with Latin America, through contacts with regional organizations such as ALER (Latin American Educational Radio Association), Chasqui in Chile, CIESPAL (International Centre for Advanced Studies in Communication in Latin America) in Ecuador, INI in Mexico and other national associations; developing new links with community broadcasters in Eastern Europe; and pursuing work already undertaken in Asia with the Asian Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD).

AMARC's newsletter, *InteRadio*, is published three times a year in English, French and Spanish. In addition, AMARC will be publishing material designed to help community broadcasters: training manuals, research findings, and technical and theoretical articles.

For more information, write to AMARC, P.O. Box 250, De Lorimier Station, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2H 2N6. Tel. (514) 982-0351; Fax (514) 843-5681.

human rights

Article 19

Article 19, which takes its name from article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is an international human rights organization designed to promote and defend the right to freedom of opinion and the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media, regardless of frontiers.

Its most recent publication, *Starving in Silence: A Report on Famine and Censorship*, analyzes recent famines in China, Ethiopia and Sudan and argues that the key to famine prevention is timely and accurate information on potential food shortages. While governments must be held responsible for the survival of their citizens, donors must also be held accountable for failing to provide forums where the causes of recurring famine can be honestly discussed.

Starving in Silence (£3.95) is available from Article 19, International Centre on Censorship, 90 Borough High Street, London SE1 1LL, UK. Tel. (071) 403 4822; Fax (071) 403 1943.

resources

Amazonia: Voices from the Rainforest, Angela Gennino, ed., *Rainforest Action Network, 301 Broadway, Suite A, San Francisco 94133 USA. 1990.*

This book, with maps and resource lists, describes the activities and needs of more than 250 organizations and grassroots activists from the remotest parts of the jungle to the lobbying offices of Washington and London.

But the guide is more than addresses and fax numbers. Unless the social and political complexities of life in the Amazon are understood, all the international campaigns and good intentions in the world will not keep a single tree standing. This guide, then, spotlights the grassroots movements of the Amazon's indigenous peoples, rubber tappers and other forest dwellers who understand, more than anyone, the meaning and importance of sustainable development and conservation.

The guide is presently available in English. Editions in Portuguese and Spanish are expected.

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Development — from A to Z

The Dictionary of Development: Third World Economy, Environment, Society, Vols.I & II, 1990 (Brian W.W. Welsh and Pavel Butorin, Eds.) is a large reference work aimed at the specialist in the development field and the curious reader alike. The two volumes attempt to bring the complexity and vastness of the Third World within the immediate reach of a reader in need of acquaintance with an unfamiliar term, organization, country, international body or indigenous NGO. There are also entries on development theories, historical events and conceptual discussions relevant to Third World studies.

In the beginning the Dictionary provides a chart of about 25 comparable socio-economic indicators for each Third World country as a key to its relative development. The main body covers a wide range of issues, like fertilizer and water quality; malaria and house construction; women's liberation and food production; family planning and famine; poverty and ill-health; disease and sanitation; the homeless and population pressures; women in development; the rights of children and campaigns to immunize them against disease; air and water pollution, waste disposal, recycling and toxic wastes dumping; the application of science and technology to development; wild species, genetic resources and their ownership and biotechnology; habitats and the rights of indigenous peoples to preserve their cultures; nuclear and alternative energy sources; the construction of dams and resettlement of communities.

Most of the entries have bibliographical references for the reader interested in the further pursuit of a subject. The book draws heavily on the experience and knowledge of many named researchers and nameless workers in the field, as well as publicly available information from international development organizations.

The greatest value of the book is the annotated listing of non-governmental organizations operating in the development field today. It reflects the most up-to-date information regarding NGOs' work—their projects and financial status—collected by the editors.

A list of about 1,000 national and international developmental newsletters and periodicals is also included.

The book's many virtues and problems stem from its ambition to satisfy both the general reader and the specialist. The Dictionary of Development will be indeed helpful to a student puzzled by integrated rural development, to a journalist seeking a quick answer to where the expression "Third World" came from, to a businessman looking for a useful address, to an official in need of some quick and useful statistics, and to the general reader searching for understanding on the issue of debt crisis.

K. Garoudis

The Dictionary is available from Garland Publishing, Inc., 136 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, USA; or from St. James Press, 2-6 Boundary Row, London SE1 8HP, UK. $150.00

awards

The World Food Prize Foundation is inviting nominations for next year's **World Food Prize** laureate. The award was established to recognize, encourage and reward outstanding achievements in improving the world food supply. It is meant to inspire men and women to dedicate their talents to careers that address world food problems. A nominee must personally have made a significant and applied contribution to the quality, quantity or availability of food. Nominations must be postmarked by 31 December.

For more information on the nomination procedure, etc., write to The World Food Prize, Office of the Secretariat, David G. Topel, Dean, College of Agriculture, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011, USA. Tel. (515) 294-2518.

education

Teaching about United Nations Peace-keeping, *United Nations Department of Public Information.*

Another manual in a series designed for use with secondary school students. It attempts to bring together the wealth of information that exists in the UN on peace-keeping in a form that can be used easily in the classroom.

The manual can be used separately or with an educational video entitled *About the United Nations: Peace-keeping*. The video is presented by a peace-keeping soldier and gives a visual account of peace-keeping operations, including scenes of soldiers at work and an overview of the history of UN peace-keeping activities. The first chapter of the manual is written as a teaching guide for the video, while the other chapters expand on the peace-keeping theme.

The topic of peace-keeping can be taught in social studies, history, political science, geography and current events classes.

To order UN publications and films on peace-keeping, contact your nearest UN Information Centre or Service. You may also write to Public Inquiries, Department of Public Information, United Nations, New York, N.Y. 10017, USA.

Living in a Global Environment: Classroom Activities in Development Education, *edited by John Fien, Australian Geography Teachers' Association Inc., GTAQ, 36 Rose Street, Wooloowin, Brisbane 4030, Australia. 1989, $Aus15.00 or sets of 10 for $Aus120.00 + postage. NGOs may purchase bulk copies in multiples of 10 for resale at $Aus90.00 + postage.*

This book reflects 40 development education themes culled from the New Internationalist Calendar (1984-1989). Each theme is presented in the form of a short story about a real-life person and includes maps, tables, photographs, diagrams and text.

The corresponding classroom activities were written by active geography teachers and lecturers for 14-16-year-old students. However, the activities are flexible and open to adaptation.

appropriate tech

AT Source Magazine, *AT Source, P.O. Box 41, 6700 AA Wageningen, The Netherlands. 35 Dutch Guilders (4 issues a year).*

This is a technology and development quarterly magazine, specializing in appropriate technology, devoted to facilitating the transfer of technology. It is directed towards local development organizations, project managers, Northern NGOs and donors, consultants, political decision-makers in governmental or international organizations, universities, libraries and all those in favour of social and technological development in the Third World.

INSTEAD is the acronym of the **Information Service on Technological Alternatives for Development.** INSTEAD's services are available to people directly or indirectly involved in promotion, evaluation, development, dissemination, testing and adaptation of appropriate technology. An initiative of the International Labour Office (ILO), INSTEAD is based on a feasibility study carried out under contract by the well-known international NGO, SATIS. The Service has been built up over some two to three years and is now fully operational. Information available may take one or more of the following forms:

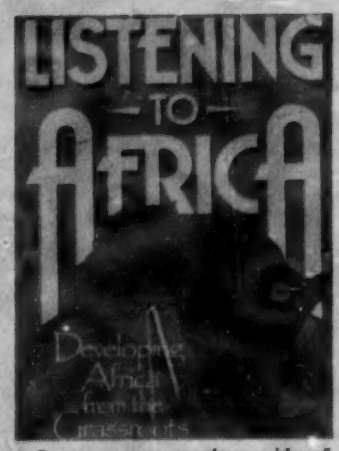
- Bibliographic search on a specific product, process, topic, institution, etc.
- Lists of equipment suppliers and/or manufacturers.
- Copies of catalogues, brochures, books, reports, articles, etc.
- Bibliographies on specific technological sectors.
- Lists of addresses of institutions, individuals, etc.
- Newsletter.

Inquiries to: Gabrielle Thevenon, INSTEAD, ILO, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland.

africa

Listening to Africa: Developing Africa from the Grassroots, by Pierre Pradervand, *Greenwood Press, Inc., 88 Post Road West, Box 5007, Westport CT 06881, USA. $45.00.*

For the past 15 years, Africa has seen remarkable change. New energies, new experiences, a burst of creativity, a courage defying explanation are being manifested by millions of people. Especially in the villages, a silent revolution is under way that is changing the continent's development landscape.



Because most people outside of Africa know little of these changes, Pradervand has written of a grassroots revolution which could be the greatest sign of hope for Africa today. This study describes the numerous self-help projects initiated by peasant farmers, including the creation of original savings schemes, the invention of new food storage systems, the distribution of family planning information, the organization of centres for traditional medicine, etc. The book also lays great emphasis on the cultural dimensions of development and how peasant farmers are stressing the need to return to their own cultural roots.

population

Taking Population Seriously, by Frances Moore Lappé and Rachel Schurman, *The Institute for Food and Development Policy, 145 Ninth St., San Francisco, CA 94103, USA. $7.95.*

The authors confront one of the most pressing social problems in the world today. They state that "high birth rates among the poor can best be understood as a defensive weapon against structures of power that fail to provide, or actively block, sources of security beyond the family. Rapid population growth reflects the widespread denial of essential human rights to survival resources—land, food, jobs—and the means to prevent pregnancy". Critical of many family programmes, the authors make a distinction between programmes that participate in "an overall attack on the social forces keeping birth rates high" and those that "provide family planning as an alternative to social change". They offer several societies as examples to show that family planning programmes can be successful when combined with socio-economic reforms that provide poor people with more choices.

information

UNISER (Information Services on the United Nations) is a computer database that offers daily highlights of UN activities, UN press releases, resolutions and documents, selected UN news in Spanish, access to other UN databases and newswire services and search capability, among others.

Of special interest is the electronic conferencing service offered by the secretariat of the UN Conference on Environment and Development 1992 (UNCED). The UNCED Information System acts primarily as a public-access bulletin board, carrying the latest news and updates on ECO '92, as the conference is popularly called.

It is composed of four separate electronic databases provided in a "read only" format that users can download to their terminals: "Update" is the main conference and contains all of the latest documents and information; "Documents" is an archive, storing all documents moved from Update; "Schedule" lists all UNCED activities (not yet operational); and "Related events" provides information on all events sponsored by organizations other than UNCED (not yet on line).

Total on-line charges vary from $27 to $32 per hour. This includes a 50 per cent discount for educational institutions, libraries and universities. There is a minimum monthly charge of $15.00.

Users with a personal computer, modem and telephone access to TCN should contact: Telecommunications Cooperative Network, 505 8th Avenue, Suite 1805, New York, N.Y. 10018, USA. Tel. (212) 714-9780.

Users without TCN access can contact Global Education Motivators, Inc., Chestnut Hill College, Germantown and Northwestern Avenues, Philadelphia, PA 19118-2695, USA. Tel. (215) 248-1150.

information

Electronic Mail: Communication for Beginners, *Third World Information Network, 345 Goswell Road, London ECIV 7JT UK. £ 2.50, $5.00.*

Electronic mail is one of the developments made possible by new information technologies. It enables ordinary citizens to tap the various information banks available on international computer systems, or to use computer networking towards progressive social ends, such as international computer networks like Greenet, Poptel, and Alternet.

Illustrations by Sergio Navarro

In this illustrated booklet, TWIN aims to give an introduction to the possibilities opened up by electronic mail and the computer. Its aim is to give guidelines on the basic requirements, how much money is needed, what skills are necessary, and how to get the best out of the wide range of possibilities for the user. The booklet was written with organizations in mind which do not yet have a telex and which need to communicate with other people elsewhere, fast.

telecom

The Center for Telecommunications Development was created in 1985 in order to help reduce the widening gap in telecommunication facilities between the industrialized and developing world. The Center works to expand advisory services and technical support to telecommunication sectors in developing countries by organizing evaluation and study missions to identify needs; recruiting experts and consultants to provide technical support; and mobilizing private and public investment in developing countries' telecommunication sectors. It also maintains a database on the status of telecommunications sectors in developing countries.

For more information, contact the Center through the International Telecommunications Union, Place des Nations CH-1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland. Tel. (41) 22-995111; Fax. (41) 22-337-256; Telex. 421 000 UIT CH.

courses

Basic Data on International Courses Offered in the Netherlands 1991/1992 lists the 200 courses that are offered in the Netherlands. These special courses, on topics varying from hydraulic and agricultural sciences to aerial cartography, are intended primarily for people from the Third World. Each year more than 2,000 persons attend these courses, most of them on grants from the Dutch government. Instruction is in English or, in a few cases, French.

For more information, write to Information Department, Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education, P.O. Box 90734, 2509 LS, The Hague, the Netherlands. Tel. 070-3610527.

calendar

Associative Movements in Community Development, International Colloquium, 9-14 February 1991, Gisenyi, Republic of Rwanda.

Sponsored by the International Association for Community Development (IACD), the seminar will bring together representatives of diverse movements (women's, youth, professional, cooperatives, friendly societies, and associations in the fields of culture, education, health, etc.) and community development leaders to study how such movements could collaborate to meet people's needs and how community development appeals to associative movements, integrates them and provides them with specific tasks.

For more particulars, write to International Association for Community Development, 179, rue du Débarcadère, B-6001 Marcinelle, Belgium.

scholarships

World Bank Graduate Scholarship Program.

The World Bank has awarded about $2 million in scholarships to 80 people for development-related graduate study at universities in Asia, Australia, Canada, Europe and the United States during the 1990-1991 academic year. Seventy-four of the scholars are from developing countries.

The scholarships were awarded by the World Bank Graduate Scholarship Program, which is funded by the Japanese government and administered by the Bank's Economic Development Institute.

The scholars—61 men and 19 women—represent 39 countries. Thirty-five are from sub-Saharan Africa; 20 from Asia; 10 from Latin America and the Caribbean; nine from the developing countries of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa; and six from industrialized countries.

The application deadline for scholarships for the 1991-1992 academic year is 15 March 1991.

Inquiries should be addressed to the World Bank Graduate Scholarship Program, 1818 H Street NW, Room M-4001, Washington, D.C. 20433, USA

debt

Banking on the Poor: Campaign against Third World Debt, *Christian Aid, P.O. Box 100, London SE1 7RT, UK.*

Among the consequences of the debt crisis are the marked increase in poverty among many of the poorest people of the world and the hastening of the destruction of the environment. The Banking on the Poor campaign is a response to take action to oppose further debt repayments.

Its information pack contains the following subjects: the whys and wherefores; dealing with debt; acting on debt; workshop ideas; know the jargon; and resources list.

asia

Thai Development Newsletter is a quarterly published by the Thai Development Support Committee (TDSC) to promote better understanding of the country's social problems and support for development work there.

The articles featured in edition no. 18, 1990 describe the connections between the natural environment and the Thai way of life. In particular, how the poor and rural people are often the first and most affected when their environment is degraded. Stories include "Dam fever", "Community forests", "Commercial forests", "Death of a river", and "Invasion of the prawn farms". Also, a village report, media resources, book reviews and news from NGOs.

Also available from TDSC are 20-minute **videotapes on development in Thailand,** on six separate issues (in English): rural development; health, slums, children, human rights; and overview of Thai NGOs.

For more information on video and subscription rates, write to Thai Development Support Committee, 530 Soi St Louis 3, South Sathorn Road, Bangkok 10120, Thailand.

catalogues

The IUCN Conservation Library—Publications Catalogue 1990, *IUCN Publications Services Unit, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge, CB3 0DL, UK.*

IUCN—the World Conservation Union—presents a unique collection of publications to match its comprehensive scope in promoting and encouraging the protection and sustainable utilization of living resources. Subjects include threatened species, parks and protected areas, environmental law and administration, sustainable development, and areas of conservation concern, such as tropical forests and wetlands.

1990 Catalog of Educational Materials, *World Bank Publications, P.O. Box 7247-8619, Philadelphia, PA 19170-8619, USA.*

Produced by the Development Education Program within the Bank's Publication Department, the materials presented are designed for classes in economics, geography, global issues, international affairs, social studies, and world history. They help students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills; better understand economic and social development; interpret maps, charts and graphs; gather, analyze and synthesize data and information; and perform statistical calculations.

environment

It is no secret that the **US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** has a wealth of information to share. It has been in the business of environmental protection for a long time, gained valuable experience, done significant research on many topics, and learned from some mistakes. But finding the information one needs can be a challenge.

The following guide to EPA services can help make the international researcher more aware of its sources and services.

What kinds of information are available? In the area of pollution prevention and abatement, EPA maintains three general types of information:

1) **Technical and scientific**—reports, databases, analytical computer programmes and models, test methods and data.

2) **Legal**—policy guidelines, regulations, laws, legal files of rule-making actions, including transcripts of hearings, litigation records and public comments.

3) **Educational**—non-technical background information, pamphlets, posters, kits for students and teachers.

How should you pose a request for information? To help ensure that you receive useful information, it is important to be as specific as possible about what you need and how you plan to use it. For example, a vague request for "all documents on water pollution" will rarely produce a satisfactory answer. Did you really want to know about—the extent of EPA's authority in this area? safe drinking water limits? water reclamation and reuse? Do you need the information to—write a law? teach a class? plan a sewage treatment facility?

Where is the best place to request information? The INFOTERRA US National Focal Point (part of the UNEP system) serves as a clearinghouse for international requests addressed to EPA. The INFOTERRA staff will either answer your question directly or refer your inquiry to the proper source. It locates documents, provides photocopies of articles, compiles bibliographies and lists of contacts, and assists international researchers to use the EPA library.

Information charges. Except for documents from the National Technical Information Service (NTIS), EPA can supply most available information at no charge to the requester.

Sources. For basic non-technical information concerning EPA and the environment:

Public Information Center (PM211B), US Environmental Protection Agency, 401 M Street, SW, Washington, D.C. 20460. Tel. (202) 382-2080.

For information concerning EPA reports, directives, policy and library holdings, and international requests:

INFOTERRA, Headquarters Library (PM211A), US Environmental Protection Agency, 401 M Street, SW, Washington, D.C. 20460. Tel. (202) 382-5917.

Facsimile numbers for all agency offices: (202) 382-7883, (202) 382-7884, (202) 382-7886; verification number (202) 382-2078.

The Compendium Newsletter: Your Guide to the World's Environmental Crisis, Nancy Pearlman, Ed.

Although this newsletter's target audience is mainly in the United States, the environmental issues covered have international appeal and/or repercussions, to wit, radioactive accidents, wetlands protection, World Food Day, World Renewable Energy Congress, Chile's forests, logging ban in Thailand, debt-for-nature swaps, water pollution, etc. It has a calendar of events, resources, book reviews and summaries of meetings.

In the US, Pearlman presides over two radio shows—Environmental Viewpoints and Environmental Directions. She also hosts ECONEWS, a weekly, half-hour television series covering all environmental issues. Audiocassettes of Environmental Directions and videocassettes of ECONEWS are available.

To subscribe and for information on rates, write to Educational Communications, PO. Box 35473, Los Angeles, California 90035-0473, USA.

Barbara Lehr

'No longer afraid of dying'

Chico Mendes, the charismatic founder of the Brazilian rubber tappers union, was murdered on 22 December 1988. As a trade union leader, he won international acclaim as leader of a non-violent campaign to protect the Amazon rainforest, on which the rubber tappers depend for their living. He died because he was too successful, becoming a threat to the big landowners and business interests who currently profit from the forest's wholesale destruction.

In the book *Fight for the Forest: Chico Mendes in His Own Words,* co-authored with Tony Gross, (Latin America Bureau, 1 Amwell Street, London ECIR 1UL, UK. £ 3.70), Mendes talks of his life's work, in the last major interview conducted just weeks before his death. He recalls the rubber tappers' campaign against forest clearances; their alliances with local Indian groups and the national and international environmental lobby. Together, they developed sustainable alternatives for the Amazon basin which would guarantee their livelihood while safeguarding the forest.

Fight for the Forest is a powerful testament to Chico Mendes' life, revealing how local people are leading the worldwide fight to save Amazonia. For Chico Mendes and the rubber tappers of Brazil, the fight for the forest was, and is, a matter of life and death.

Mexico

Super Barrio to the rescue!

by Lucy Conger

Dressed in screaming red and yellow wrestler's tights, a masked man prowls the corridors of power of Mexico City. With every ripple of his cape, he sends shockwaves through the government bureaucracy and advances another step toward winning another housing battle for the city's burgeoning population of slumdwellers.

The mystery marauder is SuperBarrio Gómez, the self-appointed defender of Mexico City's poor and homeless. This new folk hero is a combination of Superman and El Santo, a free-style wrestling champion who was hugely popular throughout Mexico City's inner city neighbourhoods where residents are crazy for the sport. It is no accident that SuperBarrio wears such bright colours: red is for combativeness and strength, and yellow is for the sun of hope.

Never without his mask ("It's my kryptonite", he explained in a recent interview), SuperBarrio can sweep into a government office and demand that housing officials release credits to citizens' groups that qualify for aid. Bureaucrats know SuperBarrio, and they know him as a tenacious defender of Mexico City's often invisible poor and needy. The masked man gets action where ordinary citizens would face an uphill fight.

SuperBarrio arose from the rubble left by the 1985 earthquake that destroyed lower-class neighbourhoods in the heart of the Mexican capital. With city services stretched beyond their limits, and poor citizens increasingly marginalized, SuperBarrio quickly caught on to become the mascot of the Asamblea de Barrios, a city-wide group of neighbourhood organizations that now represents 20,000 families who are fighting to obtain housing credits and to stave off evictions.

In a short time, the friendly protector has become a peaceful and powerful urban warrior who stimulates community organization and acts as a social conscience for Mexico City. In countless public appearances, SuperBarrio promotes awareness of a wide range of civic issues from the use of condoms to prevent AIDS to forming poll-watching groups to prevent election fraud.

"For us SuperBarrio is a social wrestler —he comes to take up our causes', says Teresa Martínez, coordinator of the Barrio Defense Committee that is active in Colonia Guerrero, an inner city neighbourhood where many residents lost their housing in the earthquake or are at risk of being evicted. "Some authorities are afraid of him", says Martínez. "So when we want to make an important negotiation, we invite him."

In sprawling Mexico City—the world's largest city—SuperBarrio seems to be everywhere at once. Most people resign themselves to several hours of commuting to get to and from work. How does the seemingly ubiquitous masked hero do it?

He is reluctant to admit it, but explains that there are actually several SuperBarrios who lead the community groups into bureaucratic battle.

One of the men, Marco Rascón, is a self-styled ideologue of SuperBarrio's social campaigns. Through his regular column in the independent daily *La Jornada* newspaper, Rascón presents SuperBarrio's point of view on current affairs, commenting on conflicts in small towns, describing how local groups have organized self-help actions, and publicizing popular causes. Rascón appears in public sometimes as the masked SuperBarrio, a heavy-set version of the free-style wrestler, and on other occasions dressed as an ordinary citizen of the disheveled variety.

Fighting evictions has become a hallmark of the defense committees that belong to the Asamblea de Barrios, and SuperBarrio is often on the scene to help residents as they confront landlords trying to throw tenants out on the street.

In Colonia Guerrero, a lower-class centre-city neighbourhood, residents live in crowded and deteriorating "vecindades", or one-room apartments, clustered around a central patio located in the centre of a city block. Often they share common toilets or laundry sinks. In some cases, residents have made the best of these crowded conditions, and help each other tend to their children and have formed strong neighbourhood organizations.

For example, Teresa Martínez and her neighbours have organized an elaborate system for blocking evictions. The so-called "Alert Commission" swings into action when a landlord gets near a household that has been threatened with eviction.

Neighbours phone in to a network that immediately begins advising nearby residents that an eviction is imminent. The threatened family, or their neighbours, shoot off loud firecrackers that let everyone in the area know an eviction is under way. Neighbours flock to the endangered household and crowd around to protect the family and discourage the landlord.

In one year, in Colonia Guerrero alone, this type of community action has prevented more than 50 evictions.

"Nowadays, people don't accept eviction. If you go out to look, you aren't going to find housing—especially if you earn the minimum wage", SuperBarrio said in an interview in his home in Colonia BuenaVista, a working class neighbourhood near Colonia Guerrero.

Aside from these constant emergency operations, SuperBarrio can point to long-term projects he is involved with. By working together, the Asamblea de Barrios groups and SuperBarrio have obtained credits from the city's housing agency, FONHAPO (Fondo para Habitación Popular), for housing projects that will house more than 1,500 families.

It is not hard to find SuperBarrio's modest apartment, even though he lives in a crowded neighbourhood. On the tree-lined street where his *vecindad* is located, there is a colourful mural in the best Mexican tradition of painting. It shows SuperBarrio standing on a city street surrounded by banners demanding "End to Evictions!" and "Housing for the People!" SuperBarrio is cordial, personable and has a sense of humour. But, his face is an enigma: he even refused to remove his mask when US immigration officials detained him in Los Angeles to check his visa. Not a chance that he would remove the mask for a foreign reporter.

But for SuperBarrio, housing is only one skirmish in the war that must be waged to improve the standard of living for the poor majority among the the city's 18 million residents. "My role is to promote popular organization, and organization that is not only for satisfying personal needs like housing", he says.

In the broadest sense, SuperBarrio's work of encouraging community organization helps advance the cause of democracy in Mexico where, traditionally, citizen participation in civic life has been severely limited. A new culture of participation and self-help arose in Mexico City after the earthquake when the homeless set up groups to fight for government aid. "The participation of people in solving problems is an aspect of democracy", says SuperBarrio.

Shortly after his first appearance in 1987, SuperBarrio gained national prominence in Mexico when he became a leading spokesman for popular organization to prevent vote fraud in national elections held in July 1988.

With inflation and unemployment growing as Mexico's economic crisis persists, SuperBarrio is now staging a campaign to protest the government's austerity plan that has slashed real wages by 50 per cent and shriveled social programmes.

Recently, SuperBarrio mobilized demonstrations against the government's anti-inflation pacts which, with the support of union bosses, captains of industry and government officials, have held down wages and slowed price increases.

Last August, backed by the Asamblea de Barrios, popular food supply councils and other city civic groups, SuperBarrio launched a "Pact against Hunger". The 11-point pact calls for reversing current government policies and implementing wage hikes, price freezes, increases in farm guarantee prices and higher taxes on the extremely rich.

"For us SuperBarrio is a social wrestler —he comes to take up our causes."

In his "BarrioMovil", a 1950 panel truck, SuperBarrio inched along the capital's chic Paseo de la Reforma boulevard leading 25 civic organizations in a "March of Popular Envy of Extreme Wealth". Banging empty pots and pans and carrying banners that said "Lower Food Prices", the protesters symbolically closed the Mexico Stock Exchange and the offices of foreign banks and embassies to protest against the increasingly inequitable distribution of income in Mexico.

Lately, some workers in Mexico's labour movement have been talking of a "Super-Worker". So don't be surprised if next spring, instead of traditional poinsettias, Mexico will be sprouting red and yellow SuperBarrios all over the countryside. □

Lucy Conger is a US freelance journalist living in Mexico.

photos by Keith Dannemiller

Community organizers seek Super B's dashing presence at their demonstrations.